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The Evolution of Tsarist Policy on the Armenian Question in the South Caucasus (1903-1914)

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Submitted for the degree of PhD

November 2014

The work presented in this thesis is my own.

Onur Onol

ABSTRACT

From the Tsarist confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church in 1903 to the outbreak of the First World War, relations between Russia and its Armenian subjects gradually changed. This thesis scrutinizes how and why this gradual change took place between 1903 and 1914 by looking at the interaction between the Russian administration and the three political pillars of the Russian Armenians (the Dashnaktsutun, the Armenian Church, and the Armenian bourgeoisie) as well as Russian foreign policy considerations.

The confiscation decree of 1903 triggered an immense reaction by the Russian Armenians against the Russian government, which became part of the revolutionary unrest in the South Caucasus in 1905. The relations began to improve with the arrival of the viceroy of the Caucasus, Illarion I. Vorontsov-Dashkov as a general Tsarist recovery was underway. From 1907 to 1912, the Russian authorities reformulated their relations with the political pillars of the Russian Armenians. In this period, by eliminating the Dashnaktsutun as a political threat in the South Caucasus and sorting out its differences with the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie, the Russian regime had improved its relations with the Russian Armenians.

By 1912, there were no serious disagreements between the Russian Armenians and the Tsarist authorities, for whom other threats, such as the pan-Islamist movement in the South Caucasus took precedence. This study also adds the foreign policy dimension to the picture as it became the dominant aspect of the relations between the Russian administration and the Russian Armenians between 1912 and 1914. The changes in the international dynamics, particularly regarding the future of the Ottoman Empire, further solidified the improved relations as Russia decided to become the patron and the defender of Armenians in late 1912.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to express my utmost gratitude to my supervisor, Orlando Figes, for his invaluable guidance during my studies. I am grateful for his detailed comments on my drafts, his suggestions on style as well as his interest and enthusiasm in my academic development. I have always felt fortunate to have him as my supervisor.

At the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, Birkbeck College, I was provided with support at different stages of my studies that smoothed my path. My mentors Frank Trentmann and Jessica Reinisch gave me useful advice on various aspects of academic life. I would like to thank Jessica Reinisch and Fred Anscombe for their valuable comments during my upgrade. I am also grateful to the Department of History, Classics and Archaeology and the Birkbeck College for awarding me scholarships without which it would have been impossible for me to pursue my PhD studies. I would also like to thank my examiners, Simon Dixon of University College London, SSEES and Peter Waldron of University of East Anglia, for their comments on the thesis and suggestions for future research.

I would also like to thank my professors at the Center for Russian Studies, I.D. Bilkent University who fostered my initial training as an historian of imperial Russia. In this sense, I am indebted to Mark Almond, Hasan Ali Karasar, Hakan Kırımlı, Sean McMeekin, and in particular, Norman Stone, who has been a continuous source of support and erudite guidance that steered me in the right direction. I would also like to thank the staff of the archives and libraries in which I undertook the research for this thesis.

During my studies, I have been fortunate to have friends who offered their support when I needed it. I would like to thank Erman Şahin for his friendship in London and scholarly talks we have had. Christine Stone in Oxford; David Rowson and William Taylor in London; Siyami Eren Çakar in Moscow; Mustafa Bozkurt, Kazım Şenocak, Serkan Eymur and Gülüzar Eymur in Ankara helped me in various ways during my studies for which I will always be grateful.

I would like to thank my wife, Tuğba Ayas, whose love and unconditional support made me go on. During difficult times, she has always been there for me to listen and offer encouragement. I am extremely grateful to my parents, who have supported me emotionally and financially since I started my graduate studies. They have been very understanding and their love and support helped me sail through. My brother Can opened his home to me and also became a serious companion during the last phases of finishing my thesis. I am forever indebted to my family for all they have done for me.

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NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION AND USAGE

For the transliteration of Russian-language words and the names in the cited Russian documents (with the exception of anglicized names of the Tsars and a few well-established names), I have employed a simplified Library of Congress system but I have omitted the hard and soft signs for the sake of convenience. For place names that are located in the Russian Empire, I have preferred the official Russian name (hence Tiflis, not Tbilisi) but have kept the English forms of the most common ones (e.g. St. Petersburg, Moscow etc.). Although the term Transcaucasus was used in the official documents, I have preferred ‘South Caucasus,’ which is geographically more appropriate and politically more neutral. The Russian Armenian surnames mostly had three variants in the official Russian documentation, (ending in -ian, -iants, and -ov), which were sometimes used interchangeably by different Tsarist state institutions. In most cases, I have preferred the variant in the cited Russian official document.

The Julian calendar was in force in Russia until 1918 and was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar in the twentieth century. For the Russian primary documents cited in the thesis, I have given the date on the document, followed by its conversion to the Gregorian calendar in brackets. The Ottoman Empire had Rumi and *Hijra* calendars and I have given the Ottoman date on the document followed by its Gregorian equivalent in brackets. For the sake of consistency and convenience, I have used Gregorian dates throughout the text.

INTRODUCTION

This study begins with a hectic period in the history of Russian-Armenian relations, the confiscation of Armenian Church properties in 1903, and ends with the outbreak of another one, the First World War. In the Russian Empire, the treatment of the Armenians underwent a gradual change between 1903 and 1914. This study intends to explain this change in the Russian treatment of its own Armenians by analysing domestic and international dynamics that caused it.

It was said that ‘if Siberia and Central Asia were the hells of the Russian functionary, the Caucasus was his purgatory.’¹ The Russian functionaries had to deal with a gamut of nationalities, religions and naturally problems of the warmer part of their purgatory, the South Caucasus, which had been under Russian control since 1828. As Layton asserts, back in the early days of the Russian conquest, the Caucasus was considered a rich but a backward place in the imagination of the Russians, not unlike India in the eyes of the British.² If the resources were put into good use, with proper administration, the Russians believed that they could entirely change the place. The first attempt was made with Tiflis when the first viceroy, Mikhail S. Vorontsov, arrived in 1845. The Russian administrative capital of the Caucasus was rebuilt in line with the latest urban tastes of the day. Big boulevards, bridges, theatres, and an opera were added to the centre of the city.

After the defeat at the Crimean War came the tumultuous wars in the North Caucasus, which forced the Tsarist regime to put military prerogatives first on the agenda. It took a nearly a decade to pacify the place and then the news of the great reforms of the 1860s reached the southern corner of the empire. However, the land reforms—officially introduced in the South Caucasus in 1870—were an arduous task as much as anywhere in

¹ Quoted in Luigi Villari, *Fire and Sword in the Caucasus* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1906), 112.

² Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 73-74.

the empire. The land hungry peasants, an overwhelming majority, would have to wait for serfdom to be effectively stamped out.

By then, the Armenians were on good terms with their Russian rulers and adapted well under the developing Tsarist hold in the place. Integrating well into the Tsarist educational and cultural establishment, the Armenians produced several important Tsarist functionaries not only for the Caucasus but also for the empire like Mikhail T. Loris-Melikov, the famous Minister of Interior of Alexander II, and Ivan D. Delianov, the Minister of Education under Alexander III. Additionally, because of their commercial expertise and vast trade networks, scattered throughout in the South Caucasus, as well as into the Ottoman and Persian empires, the Russian Armenians were considered a useful element by the Russian administration.³

This became even more so with the oil boom in the region in 1870s, by which Baku soon became the world's largest oil producer and exporter owing to the rising global demand for kerosene. The city of Baku was extravagantly rebuilt, with electrical illumination earlier than most of the European cities thanks to its oil resources which were said to 'produce more wealthy men than America.'⁴ Apart from foreign and Russian entrepreneurs (like the Nobel family), the Armenian bourgeoisie of the South Caucasus was also part of this oil boom. Armenian oil tycoons, such as Gukasev, Mirzoev and Mantashev, flourished and contributed to the strengthening of Armenian economic might in the region, particularly in the cities.⁵ The Armenians also dominated the professional jobs because of their higher rates of urbanization and literacy. With the introduction of municipal reforms to the region, by virtue of their wealth, the Armenian bourgeoisie

³ Ronald G. Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993), 49. In this period, many members of the Armenian bourgeoisie were awarded with the title of *pochetnye grazhdane* (honourable citizens), particularly in Tiflis. As the highest urban estate, this title was usually granted to merchants and industrialists, as well as to the military and civil servants who were not promoted to nobility.

⁴ James D. Henry, *Baku: An Eventful History* (London: Archibald Constable and co., 1905), 5-6.

⁵ Robert W. Tolf, *The Russian Rockefellers: The Saga of the Nobel Family and the Russian Oil Industry* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), 132.

became a strong political force in the City Duma and *uprava* (the executive board) of the key cities like Tiflis and Baku.⁶

In the meantime, the Russian administration in the Caucasus had also good relations with the Armenian Catholicosate in Echmiadzin, the supreme ecclesiastical seat of the Armenian Church.⁷ Shortly after the Russian conquest of the South Caucasus, with the introduction of the *Polozhenie* (Statute) of 1836, the Armenian Church was given a degree of autonomy in religious matters, tax exemptions and, most importantly, a principal position in Armenian education.⁸ On top of its responsibilities for primary schooling, it also ran various Armenian seminaries, which were important institutions for higher education in the Caucasus, a periphery without a university.⁹

In return for these privileges, the head of the Armenian Church, the Catholicos, was expected to help the Russian government with its dealings with the Armenians, both at home and abroad. Particularly in the earlier phases of the establishment of the Russian hold in the Caucasus, this mutually beneficial arrangement enabled the Russians to gain Armenian loyalties. However, this began to change with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, after which the Russian government adopted a less accommodating stance on the subject nationalities with its measures of Russification.

In the South Caucasus, this task was assigned to new High-Commissioner of the Caucasus, Aleksander M. Dondukov-Korsakov. Not long after he arrived in Tiflis in

⁶ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 19-21; Vartan Gregorian, 'The Impact of Russia on the Armenians and Armenia,' in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 186-89. The members of the *uprava* and the mayor (also the head of the *uprava* and the City Duma) were elected by the members of the City Duma. These local administrative bodies had a wide range of responsibilities. Audrey Altstadt, 'The Baku City Duma - Arena for Elite Conflict,' *Central Asian Survey* 5, no. 3-4 (1986): 52-62.

⁷ Other sees of the Armenian Church, the Armenian Patriarchates in Istanbul and Jerusalem, and the Catholicosates in Sis and Akhtamar were autonomous in their internal political and ecclesiastical affairs. However, they all recognized the ecclesiastical primacy of the Catholicosate in Echmiadzin as the supreme leader of the Armenian Church. Abel Abrahamian, *The Church and Faith of Armenia* (London: The Faith Press, 1920), 34-7.

⁸ In the administration of the Armenian Church, the Echmiadzin Synod played the role of an advisory body to the Catholicos.

⁹ The most important seminaries were Kevorkian (1874) in Echmiadzin and Nersesian (1825) in Tiflis. Although these seminaries were administered by the Armenian Church, their curricula were not that different from their secular equivalents. Kevork A. Sarafian, *History of Education in Armenia* (La Verne: La Verne College, 1978), 266-7; Vakhe Erkanian, *Armianskaia kultura v 1800-1917 gg.* (Erevan: Sovetakan grokh, 1985), 15.

1882, the tables were completely turned for the Armenians. The Armenian Church was suspected of harbouring separatist elements and promoting Armenian nationalism using its cultural and religious privileges.¹⁰ After the opposition of the Armenian Church to the law of 1884, which called for the abolition of the autonomies of the schools of the non-Russian population in the empire and the imposition of new restrictions on them, the Armenian parish schools (except for the seminaries) were closed in 1885 by orders of Dondukov-Korsakov.¹¹ Despite its annulment a year later, these measures were the signs of change of the Armenian image in the Russian eyes.

In 1886, Pobedonostsev informed the Tsar that along with the Georgians, the Armenians were entertaining ‘the mad dream of the reestablishment of their national independence.’¹² Apart from the Armenian Church, there was a more dangerous force that disturbed the Tsarist authorities regarding this: the nascent Armenian revolutionary movement, which had links with the Russian revolutionary movement.¹³ The strong Tsarist reaction after 1881 compelled most of the Russian revolutionaries to go underground or to leave for Europe. Under the strict measures of the Tsarist Russification measures, some Armenian revolutionaries also found refuge in Europe. The Hnchaks were founded by the efforts of such a circle of Russian Armenians in Geneva in 1887.¹⁴ As the orthodox Marxist line of the Hnchaks failed to attract a large following among the

¹⁰ Reports of Dondukov-Korsakov to Alexander III, 1883, doc. no. 10, in *The Armenian Question in the Caucasus: Russian Archive Documents and Publications*, vol. 1, ed. Tale Heydarov (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2011), 266.

¹¹ Erkanian, 32; Valentin S. Diakin, *Natsionalnyi vopros vo vnutrennei politike tsarizma (XIX-nachalo XX vv.)* (St. Petersburg: LISS, 1998), 29; Sergei V. Kuleshov, ed., *Natsionalnaia politika Rossii: istoriia i sovremennost* (Moscow: Russkii mir, 1997), 97; Ronald G. Suny, ‘Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule,’ in *Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 2, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004), 129-30.

¹² Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 45.

¹³ Most of the founding members of the Armenian political parties had been influenced by the revolutionary tradition in Russia, especially the strategies and ideas of *Narodnaia Volia* (People’s Will). Gregorian, 208-13. The founders of the Hnchaks and the Dashnaks had connections with *Narodnaia Volia* organization. For the emergence of these parties, see Louise Z. Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

¹⁴ The main leaders of the party were Avetis and Maro Nazarbekian, a couple who were affiliated with Russian *narodnik* circles before 1881. As a tribute to the Russian revolutionary movement, the party was named Hnchak (Bell) after Herzen’s *Kolokol*. Despite its Russian Armenian origins, the party focused on the problems of the Ottoman Armenians.

Armenians, another revolutionary party, the Dashnaktsutun (Federation) was founded in Tiflis in 1890.¹⁵

The founders of the party were typical products of the Russian education system, in which they formed their ideas and met each other. After finishing the Aleksandrovskii Pedagogical Institute in Tiflis, Kristapor Mikaelian went on to study agronomy at Moscow University. Under the combined influence of nascent Armenian nationalism and *Narodnaia Volia* (People's Will), he and Simon Zavarian were pondering what needed to be done for the liberation of the Ottoman Armenians.¹⁶ After they returned to Tiflis, Stepan Zorian, a drop out from Petrovskii Academy of Agriculture, joined their group in 1889. Like Mikaelian and Zavarian, Zorian was also a lower class Russian Armenian.

Although the party was founded by Russian Armenians in Tiflis, its priority was the liberation of the Ottoman Armenians. The first party program of the Dashnaks (1892) aimed at 'political and economic freedom in Ottoman Armenia through rebellion.'¹⁷ In principle, the party was opposed to the policies of the Russian government against the Russian Armenians but it avoided operating in the Russian Empire because of the difficulties it would create and the urgency of the problems of the Ottoman Armenians.¹⁸ During the 1890s, the Dashnaks expanded their organization in the Ottoman and Russian empires as well as in Europe.¹⁹

¹⁵ As the name of the party indicates, it was initially consisted of various small groups, which were not effective by themselves.

¹⁶ Eduard Oganessian, *Vek borby: ocherk 100-letnei istorii Dashnaksnoi partii i natsionalno-osvoboditelnoi borby Armianskogo naroda* (Moscow: Feniks, 1991), 76; Anahide Ter Minassian, 'Le mouvement révolutionnaire arménien, 1890-1903,' *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 14, no. 4 (1973): 553.

¹⁷ Nalbandian, 166-8.

¹⁸ Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 17-18. In the words of Mikaelian, 'the struggle against the 'surplus blood' that was being extracted from the Ottoman Armenians had priority over the struggle against 'surplus value' being extracted from Russian Armenians.' Quoted in Gerard J. Libaridian, 'Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaktsutun,' in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, ed. Ronald G. Suny (T. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1983), 193. This stance of the party was harshly criticized by other Caucasian socialists, such as Makharadze and Shaumian. Filipp Makharadze, *Ocherki revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Zakavkaze* (Tbilisi: Gosizdat Gruzii, 1927), 320-1; Artashes B. Karinian, *Shaumian i natsionalisticheskie techeniia na Kavkaze* (Baku: Tipografiia 3-i internatsional, 1928), 22.

¹⁹ The party's highest organizational bodies were the Western and the Eastern Bureaus. The Western Bureau, based in Geneva, was responsible for the party committees in Europe, the US and the provinces of the Ottoman Empire that were west of the Giresun-Harput-Diyarbakir line. The Eastern Bureau was located in Tiflis and was responsible for the committees in Russia and the provinces of the Ottoman Empire that

In the Ottoman Empire, the Dashnaks soon began to implement most of the techniques they borrowed from their Russian tutors. In the first years; they acted as a vanguard party and aimed at revolutionizing the masses by propaganda and arming the countryside in Eastern Anatolia. To bankroll their operations, the Dashnaks extorted money from the wealthy Armenians—a practice the Russian revolutionaries made the Dashnaks familiar with their expropriations.²⁰ Supported mainly by lower and middle classes, the Dashnaks soon surpassed the Hnchaks in efficiency and popularity with their nationalist rhetoric. It was certainly a much easier way to appeal to a community whose distinct religious and linguistic identity already formed a solid basis for national consciousness.

In this period, the upward demographic trend in the cities, the expansion of a school network, and the improvement of the communications in the Caucasus were contributing to further growth of national awareness among the Russian Armenians.²¹ However, as the agricultural prices went down and the Baku oil industry began to lose pace in the 1890s, the Dashnaks were able to recruit many young people from the ranks of the unemployed and immigrants.²² Soon thereafter, the Armenian revolutionaries became a real thorn on the side of Abdulhamid II. Starting from the rebellions in Sasun and Van in 1894-1896, the activities of these Armenian revolutionary parties were aimed at attracting European intervention but without much luck. Even after the spectacular Dashnak raid of the Ottoman Bank in August 1896, the great powers, including Russia, refrained from effective intervention, while the Hamidian response was to tighten the grip over his Armenian subjects.

were east of the Giresun-Harput-Diyarbakir line. Raymond Kevorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 39.

²⁰ Hratch Dasnabedian, *History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaksutun (1890-1924)* (Milan: OEMME Edizioni, 1989), 62.

²¹ Between 1865 and 1904, the total population of the South Caucasus went up by 150%. *Bolshaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1926), 223; Delia I. Ismail-Zade, *Naselenie gorodov Zakavkazskogo kraia v XIX-nachale XX v: istoriko-demograficheskii analiz* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), 214. More interestingly, as of 1897, the South Caucasus had the youngest population in the empire on average (the average age of the region was 23.94). Richard Pipes, 'Demographic and Ethnographic Changes in Transcaucasia, 1897- 1956,' *The Middle East Journal* 13, no.1 (Winter 1959): 43. This growing young population had now better access to education and all sorts of literature, parallel to the trends in the empire. In line with the rising literacy rate, the circulation of newspapers and number of the bookshops in the region rose rapidly. Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), 110.

²² A key source of recruits for the Dashnaks was the Ottoman Armenian immigrants in the Caucasus. Anna Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993), 24.

The Russian authorities feared that an active Russian policy on the subject could risk the stability of Russian-Ottoman relations, especially at a time when the Tsar had a certain understanding with the Ottoman Sultan.²³ Moreover, there were already concerns in St. Petersburg and Tiflis regarding the separatist aspirations of the Russian Armenians, which could be further bolstered by a possible autonomy for the Ottoman Armenians.²⁴ The lack of Russian enthusiasm for a more active policy regarding the Ottoman Armenians was best epitomized by the Russian Foreign Minister, Aleksei B. Lobanov-Rostovskii, who saw ‘an Armenia without Armenians’ as a solution to the Armenian question.²⁵ Meanwhile, the petitions of the Catholicos for an audience with the Tsar regarding the Ottoman Armenians were initially refused.²⁶

By 1896, what was happening across the border was confirming the Tsarist fears of a full-fledged Armenian national movement. As Suny argues, the typical image of the Armenian in the Russian eyes was now of a revolutionary troublemaker with separatist

²³ Barbara Jelavich, *St. Petersburg and Moscow: Tsarist and Soviet Foreign Policy, 1814–1974* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1974), 229; Selim Deringil, ‘The Ottoman Empire and Russian Muslims: Brothers or Rivals?’, *Central Asian Survey* 13, no. 3 (1994): 409.

²⁴ Ervand K. Sarkisian, *Politika osmanskogo pravitelstva v zapadnoi Armenii i derzhavy v poslednei chetverti XIX i nachale XX vv.* (Erevan: Izdatelstvo AN Armianskoi SSR, 1972), 166-69; Manoug J. Somakian, *Empires in Conflict: Armenia and the Great Powers, 1895-1920* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), 24; Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1995), 74-6; Jeremy Salt, *Imperialism, Evangelism and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878-1896* (London; Portland: Frank Cass, 1993), 88-91; Musa Şaşmaz, *British Policy and the Application of Reform for the Armenians in Eastern Anatolia, 1877-1897* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2000), 260.

²⁵ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 28. Lobanov-Rostovskii’s statement was a continuation of the Russian foreign policy on the Ottoman Armenians from early 1890s. For instance, in 1890, the Russian Foreign Minister, Nikolai K. Girs, explained Russian reluctance to act for the Ottoman Armenians by noting that ‘Russia had no reason to wish for a second Bulgaria.’ Robert F. Zeidner, ‘Britain and the Launching of the Armenian Question,’ *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, no. 4 (October 1976): 481; Arshag O. Sarkissian, ‘Concert Diplomacy and the Armenians, 1890-97,’ in *Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography in Honour of G. P. Gooch*, ed. Arshag O. Sarkissian (London: Longmans, 1961), 62. The Russian line on this question was intact at the turn of the twentieth century. After 1896, the situation of the Ottoman Armenians immigrants became a serious item of debate between the Ottoman and Russian authorities. These immigrants were considered to be from the ranks of revolutionaries and were not wanted. In 1900, in a conversation with the Minister of Agriculture, Aleksei S. Ermolov, an Ottoman diplomat suggested him to settle these Ottoman Armenian immigrants to Siberia. Refusing the proposal, Ermolov had a different idea as he suggested that the Ottomans put these Armenian immigrants to an ‘empty island.’ The dispatch of the undersecretary of the Ottoman Embassy in St. Petersburg, Mehmed Bahaeddin, 29 Kanunusani 1315 [10 February 1900], doc. no. 20, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Rus İlişkileri*, vol. 2 (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2006), 50-1.

²⁶ The persistent attitude of the Catholicos finally paid off in May 1895, when he was received by the Tsar, who ultimately did not act as energetically as the Catholicos wished. Valerii G. Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana 1893-1903 gg.* (Erevan: Tunian, 2008), 111-21.

aspirations rather than an urban middle-man.²⁷ Not surprisingly, the reports of the top Tsarist officials in Tiflis and St. Petersburg portrayed a similar picture during this period.²⁸ More importantly, the Armenian revolutionaries were increasingly suspected of being supported by the Armenian Church, which led to a new wave of restrictions on the rights of the Armenian Church on schooling.²⁹ Further restrictions on the Armenian press and Armenian charitable institutions on the orders of the new High Commissioner, Prince Grigorii S. Golitsyn, were the signs of what was to come at the turn of the twentieth century.³⁰

Meanwhile, the economic prowess of the Armenians in the region was now seen in a different light by the Tsarist authorities and their neighbours. The former praises to their industrious character was now replaced with criticism of economic exploitation of the Caucasus by the Armenians.³¹ According to the Tsarist officials, the Russian Armenians were controlling the most of region's economy at the expense of their neighbours. This was particularly the case with the declining fortunes of the Georgians.³² Their traditional capital was at the hands of the Armenians, whose dominance in local politics and economic prosperity now raised eyebrows.³³ There was a similar situation in Baku, which frustrated the Azeris.³⁴

²⁷ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 43-46.

²⁸ Seyit Sertçelik, *The Emergence of the Armenian Question in the Light of Russian and Armenian Sources 1678-1914* (Ankara: TBMM Kültür, Sanat Yayınları, 2010), 248; Kuleshov, 98; The report of the Minister of Justice to the Tsar on the affairs regarding state crimes in 1897 and a short overview of the anti-government movement in the empire in the period 1894-1897, in *Revolutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v dokladakh ministra Muravieva (1894-1904)* (St. Petersburg: Letopisets, 1904), 53-57.

²⁹ Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khimiana*, 172-4; Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 46; Mikhail A. Volkhonskii, *Rossiia na Kavkaze. 5 vekov istorii* (Moscow: Obedinennaia redaktsiia MVD Rossii, 2009), 108.

³⁰ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 47; Hrant Pasdermadjian, *Histoire de l'Arménie: Depuis les Origines jusqu'au Traité de Lausanne* (Paris: Librairie Orientale H. Samuelian, 1986), 387; Grigor Chalkushian, *Armianskii vopros v Rossii i panislamizm* (Rostov-on-Don: Elektro-pechatnia A. Ter-Abramian, 1905), 34-5.

³¹ For instance, Golitsyn spoke of 'the need to guard the rest of the Caucasian population from exploitative aspirations of the Armenians.' Extract from the report of the High Commissioner of the Caucasus to the Tsar for 1897, doc. no. 13 in Heydarov, *The Armenian Question in the Caucasus*, vol. 1, 402. Similarly, Velichko, a publicist with anti-Armenian views, described the economic position of the Armenians as 'totally parasitic.' Vasilii L. Velichko, *Polnoe sobranie publitsisticheskikh sochinenii*, vol. 1: *Kavkaz* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie M.D. Muretovoi, 1904), 29.

³² Dondukov-Korsakov reports to Alexander III, 1892-1890, doc. no. 11 in Heydarov, *The Armenian Question in the Caucasus*, vol. 1, 285.

³³ Ibid., 287; Extract from the report of the High Commissioner of the Caucasus to the Tsar for 1897, doc. no. 13 in Heydarov, *The Armenian Question in the Caucasus*, vol. 1, 372-3; Velichko, 85-6; Villari, 122;

The deterioration of relations between the Russian administration and the Russian Armenians reached a climax in 1903, when Nicholas II approved the decree allowing the confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church. The heart of religious and educational life for the Russian Armenians, the Armenian Church was now deprived of its privileges. In no time, this move brought various Armenian elements together for the defence of the Armenian Church, headed by the Dashnaks. The Russian Armenians were in total rebellion against Russian rule.

These happened at a time when general unrest was already building up in the empire and Tsarist armies were facing a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Japanese. The defeat gave the revolutionary movement extra stimulus while the ground was moving beneath the feet of the Tsarist establishment in early 1905. The South Caucasus was one of the areas in the empire, where the revolutionary movement, organized labour, and ethnic conflicts debilitated the Tsarist administration. Soon after, in February 1905, the Caucasian viceroyalty was reinstated with wide administrative responsibilities, which was expected to facilitate quick restoration of order in the region. The viceroy, Illarion I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, was a very experienced statesman and he knew that he had to address the grievances of the Armenians and stop their antagonism to the Tsarist regime. The viceroyalty needed the Armenians as allies not as enemies. Upon the viceroy's recommendation, the confiscation decree was annulled by St. Petersburg in August 1905,

Stephen F. Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005), 86; Ronald G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994), 180-81. Not surprisingly, in 1899, the most influential Georgian publicist of the day, Ilia Chavchavadze, was complaining that the Armenians were 'stripping them [the Georgians] of their national dignity, soiling their identity...as if in all Transcaucasia, there was only the one Armenian nation.' Quoted in Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 87. During the 1890s, the Armenian dominance of the Tiflis City Duma became a serious concern for the Georgians, who complained to the Russian authorities. Samvel Karapetian, *Mery Tiflisa* (Erevan: Gitutun NAN RA, 2003), 19-20; Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 86; idem., 'Tiflis: Crucible Ethnic Politics, 1860-1905,' in *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Michael F. Hamm (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), 271. In 1902, Golitsyn removed the members of the *uprava* of Tiflis and charged them with corruption. The case was dismissed later because of lack of evidence. Alexander Khatissian, 'The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part I),' *The Armenian Review* 2, no. 3 (Autumn 1949): 43.

³⁴ Jörg Baberowski, 'Tsvivilizatorskaia missiia i natsionalizm v Zakavkaze, 1828-1914 gg,' in *Novaia imperskaia istoriia postsovetского prostranstva*, ed. Ilia Gerasimov (Kazan: Tsentr issledovaniia natsionalizma i imperii, 2004), 346; Velichko, 21-2. In official correspondence, Tsarist authorities used the term 'Tatar' and sometimes simply Muslim to refer to the Azeris. Since these terms were also used to refer various other Muslim peoples in the Caucasus, I have used the term 'Azeri' instead of Tatar, particularly to denote the aspects of their national developments.

which pleased the Russian Armenians. This would be an important step that started a process of change in the relations between the Russian administration and the Russian Armenians.

By 1907, Stolypin was concerned about the Dashnaks, whom he saw as the most potent revolutionary force in the South Caucasus. The party was recently invited to the Second International and it also operated in the Ottoman and Persian empires. With its recently adopted socialist program, the Dashnaktsutun was aspiring to autonomy within a federative Russian republic. Despite the viceroy's preference for a milder approach, the response of St. Petersburg against the Dashnaks was a mass trial of the party that started in 1908 and decimated the Dashnak party organization in the South Caucasus in four years. The Dashnaks had to move their cadres to the neighbouring empires, particularly to the Ottoman Empire, where they became the allies of the Committee of Union and Progress (the CUP), the main political actor in Ottoman politics after the revolution of 1908. This would not be an alliance with a happy ending and two parties broke off in 1912, when the Armenian disillusionment about the policies of the CUP became obvious. This break was also the harbinger of change for the relations between the Dashnaks and the Russian government as their trial ended in 1912, with unexpectedly light sentences and mass acquittals. Soon thereafter, the chief prosecutor of the trial was put under criminal investigation while some Dashnaks started to depict Russia as the saviour of the Armenians.

In the post-revolutionary period, one of the reasons for the Tsarist campaign against the Dashnaks was about its affiliation with the Armenian Church, the support of which the Tsarist administration needed to regain the loyalties of the Russian Armenians. While the Dashnak sympathizers within the Armenian clergy were weeded out during the trial, Stolypin was formulating another scheme on the Armenian Church. Stolypin's scheme targeted the abolition of the autonomy and privileges of the Armenian Church, which would secure the obedience of Echmiadzin to St. Petersburg. However, this move would turn the Catholicos into an ordinary head of a non-Orthodox Church and damage his ecumenical significance, which was important for the sympathies of the Ottoman Armenians. The viceroy was aware of the costs of the previous forceful attempt in 1903

and with the support of other ministries, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; he was able to convince Stolypin for a more gradual approach and keep the privileges of the Church and its ecumenical significance intact.

Although the differences between St. Petersburg and Tiflis on the subject surfaced during the Catholicosate elections of 1908 and 1911, no substantial changes were made regarding the status of the Armenian Church. By 1912, as the only non-Orthodox church in the empire to be allowed to administer its parish schools, the Armenian Church became an integral part of the stabilization in the South Caucasus. When the Russian position on the Armenian question in the Ottoman Empire changed in late 1912, the Catholicosate played a critical role to support Russia. In less than a decade, the relationship between the Russians and the Armenian Church was reversed.

For the viceroy, another natural ally of the regime was the Armenian bourgeoisie and the annulment of the confiscation decree and the maintenance of order in the region were the right steps to win them over. For their economic interests, the viceroy's stance against organized labour in the region and his support for the expansion of banking and commercialization of agriculture were also positive signs. On the other hand, the Tsarist drive on the Dashnaks meant that they would be the leading political actor among the Russian Armenians once again, particularly in local politics. This was particularly the case in Tiflis with the influence of the new mayor, Aleksandr Khatisian.

The relations of the viceroyalty with the other main nationalities of the region were also important in the quick restoration of its relations with the Armenian bourgeoisie. The Georgian nobility and peasantry were still suffering from the diminishing returns on land and seeing the Armenians dominating their beloved Tiflis. The Georgian national movement, as part of the Russian Menshevism, was still popular and it was blaming the Russian government for the declining fortunes of the Georgians. Their anti-Russian attitude was further aggravated by the Tsarist refusal of the demands for the reestablishment of the autocephaly of the Georgian Church. By 1912, the viceroy had to admit that the structural problems surrounding the Georgians (mainly their feudal social composition and the agrarian problems) led to the success of the socialist propaganda among them, which prevented better relations between the Georgians and the viceroyalty.

Nevertheless, the Azeris were a bigger concern for the viceroyalty. Their growing politicization during the three constitutional revolutions in the Russian, Persian and Ottoman empires along with other Russian Muslims raised eyebrows in Tiflis and St. Petersburg. The Azeris were increasingly becoming better-educated and more conscious of the idea of progress and national identity. More importantly, they were more populous than their neighbours and resided not far from the neighbouring Muslim empires. Although the formation of Azeri revolutionary organizations, such as Himmat and Difai, disturbed the Russian administration, it was the pan-Islamist movement that really worried them.

It was feared by the Tsarist authorities that this movement was aiming at uniting all Russian Muslims against Russia and the South Caucasus was an important base for pan-Islamist operations. Toward 1912, from the ministers in the capital to the ordinary Okhrana operative in Baku, the Russian officialdom was convinced that the South Caucasus was full of pan-Islamist emissaries sent by the CUP, who were busy with anti-Russian propaganda. As a result, by 1913, the Azeris were now the most immediate threat to the stability in the South Caucasus according to the viceroy whereas it was the Armenians in 1907.³⁵

From 1903 to 1912, domestic concerns dominated relations between the Russian administration and its Armenians. In this period, these internal problems inherited from Golitsyn's tenure were gradually addressed and the relations of the Armenians with the Russian authorities considerably improved. Changing international dynamics around 1912 would further strengthen these relations. Recovering back from the embarrassment of the defeat in the Far East and the revolutionary period, Russian foreign policy became assertive by then, especially after the assassination of Stolypin in 1911. The Ottoman defeats at the Tripolitan War and the First Balkan War gave the Russians a certain impetus to revive the question of reforms for the Ottoman Armenians.

³⁵ Illarion I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddaneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim kraem Generala-adiutanta grafa Vorontsova-Dashkova* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1907), 8-10; idem., *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1913), 9.

More importantly, from 1912 on, with their incessant demands for a more active Russian policy on the subject, the Russian Armenians played a key role in the Russian initiative. From then on, the Russians constantly supported the Armenian reforms, for which an agreement was reached in February 1914. For the Russians, apart from expanding their foreign policy interests in the Ottoman Empire, this policy was also useful for further improving their relations with their own Armenians. As a result, the relations of the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie with the Russian administration became even more cordial in this period. Even the Dashnaks decided not to antagonize with the Russians and participate in anti-Russian activities since Russia supported the Armenian reforms.

From 1912 to 1914, the Russian fears of pan-Islamist subversion in the South Caucasus were still intact and there were signs of increased labour unrest in the region. For these domestic concerns and the potential international complications regarding the Ottoman Empire, the Russian government and the viceroyalty could count on their good relations with the Russian Armenians. This continued even after the start of Russian-Ottoman hostilities in October 1914, when Nicholas II instructed the Catholicos to tell his flock that ‘a most brilliant future awaited the Armenians,’ which remained a sad and unfulfilled prophecy. This picture sharply contrasts with the one in 1903.³⁶

The Armenian state of affairs in Tsarist Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was put into perspective by Ronald G. Suny in his work, *Looking toward Armenia*. Suny explains the evolution of relations between the Russian Armenians and the Russian administration by focusing on the shift of the dominant Armenian image in the Russian eyes from 1828, when the Russians annexed the South Caucasus. I believe that he offers a useful model since he factors in domestic and international forces which altered the Russian stance, and finally the actual policies regarding the Armenian subjects of the empire.

He suggests that the three phases of the dominant Armenian image were ‘the Christian ally’ in the initial period of annexation; ‘the merchant and urban’ character in mid-

³⁶ Somakian, 78.

nineteenth century; and ‘the dissident revolutionary’ by the end of the nineteenth century.³⁷ Although the range of his book does not stop there, he does not extend his analysis to the further reversal of this ‘dissident revolutionary’ image to a ‘crucial ally’ for Russia both internally and externally between 1903 and 1914. Instead, he discusses the Tsarist oppression of the Armenians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century at length until the end of the revolution of 1905. As often in the literature, he then quickly jumps to the First World War without presenting an analysis on the change of the Russian position.

In my thesis, I would like to extend his model and scrutinize why and how the last shift of Tsarist perception of its own Armenians evolved between 1903 and 1914 by examining the relations between the Russian administration and the Russian Armenians. This study aims to account for the gradual evolution of the improved relations by scrutinizing the Russian domestic policy-making regarding the three political pillars of the Russian Armenians (the Dashnaktsutjun, the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie) between 1903 and 1912. By 1912, the Russian administration had no serious friction with the main political pillars of the Russian Armenians, who were in total rebellion against Russia not long before. The Armenian image as the most troublesome element in the South Caucasus was now replaced with the most ideal ally for the Russian regime, both internally and externally.

Between 1912 and 1914, foreign policy imperatives became the dominant influence on relations between the Russian administration and its Armenians. What happened in this period confirmed the improved relations and further solidified these relations in the face of big changes in the international arena. By drawing on a variety of unpublished archival documents, as well as a wide range of published material, this thesis offers a complete treatment of the relations of the Russian administration with the main political pillars of the Russian Armenians between 1903 and 1914.

The shift of relations between Russia and its Armenian subjects was part of the Tsarist nationalities question, which was critical for the future of the empire. An important part

³⁷ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 38-51. It should be noted that these images are not mutually exclusive and Suny’s emphasis in his model is on the dominant Armenian image in the Russian eyes.

of this question had to do with the religious affairs of the nationalities as this study demonstrates by analysing the Russian stance on the Armenian Church and the pan-Islamist movement. Apart from the students of ecclesiastical history, this study would also be of interest to the students of revolutionary organizations with its comprehensive examination of the fate of the Dashnaktsutiun in the Russian Empire—an under-explored theme in the literature.

Finally, by focusing on the intricate links between Russian domestic concerns about the Russian Armenians and Russian foreign policy interests regarding the Ottoman Armenians, this study accounts for the Russian position on the Armenian question in the Ottoman Empire from 1912 and 1914. Considering the consequences of this international dimension of the subject on the Russian and Ottoman origins of the First World War and even what actually happened during the war, the final section of the this study is intended to contribute to our understanding of the Russian foreign policy-making between 1912 and 1914.

Literature Review

The relations between Russia and its own Armenians between 1903 and 1914 have been less of a focus in the general Armenian historiography, which tends to concentrate on the Ottoman Armenians. Although general histories of the Armenians usually mention key events, such as the measures of Russification in the late nineteenth century and the confiscation decree in 1903, as part of their narratives of Russian oppression on the Russian Armenians, the aftermath of this period is usually neglected. In these narratives, Russia suddenly appears around 1912 as the patron of the Armenian reforms in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. This is often followed by an account of the Russian-Armenian collaboration in the initial years of the First World War. In almost all of these works, the upshot of the Russian shift was seen as a side issue to the bigger

questions or taken for granted whereas the relations of the Tsarist regime with its Armenians between 1903 and 1914 have been mostly ignored.

Compared with the literature on the Ottoman Armenians, the number of studies on the relations between the Russian administration and the Russian Armenians between 1903 and 1914 is limited. Apart from Suny, the works of Somakian, Tunian, Hovannisian, Sarkisyanz, Ter Minassian and Gregorian are the major works.³⁸ With the exception of Somakian and Tunian, a main deficiency of these works is the lack of primary archival material from the Russian archives.³⁹ Although this is understandable given the dates of publication of these works and the restrictions on the Russian archives during the Soviet period, it is still a key shortcoming for tracking out how the Russian position changed from 1903 onward.⁴⁰ In the absence of a thorough examination of Russian primary archival material, these accounts could not provide a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of the relations of the Russian administration with the political pillars of the Russian Armenians. The historiography on the imperial aspects of Russian rule in the Caucasus fares better in this aspect. However, because of their broader focus and time frame, these works do not offer a comprehensive analysis of the change of the fortunes of the Russian Armenians between 1903 and 1914.⁴¹

³⁸ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*; idem., 'Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule,' 109-138; Valerii G. Tunian, *Rossii i armianskii vopros* (Erevan: Muzei-institut genotsida armian, 1998); idem., *Echmiadzinskii prestol XIX- nach. XX vv.* (Erevan: Tunian, 2001); idem., *Mladoturki i armianskii vopros*, vols. 1-2. (Erevan: Muzei-institut genotsida armian, 2005); Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*; idem., 'Russian Armenia: A Century of Tsarist Rule,' *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 19, n. 1 (March 1971): 31-48; Manuel Sarkisyanz, *A Modern History of Transcaucasian Armenia: Social, Cultural, and Political* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975); Gregorian, 167-218.

³⁹ Although Tunian's works are very informative owing to his use of Russian and Armenian archival material, they are mostly descriptive rather than analytical. This is a quite common tendency among the historians of Russia and the post-Soviet countries. In addition, in his plethora of works on the subject which make use of Russian archival material, Tunian rarely uses any Western or Turkish sources, which is another problem for a full analysis of the period.

⁴⁰ Since these are the most consulted sources in English by non-specialists, it constitutes a gap in the literature. For the correspondence of the imperial centre with the viceroyalty, these scholars have mainly relied on official Soviet publications such as *Krasnyi Arkhiv* (hereafter, *KA*). Recently, in conjunction with growing political and academic interest in Stolypin's legacy in Russia, there has been a surge of published material regarding Stolypin's correspondence, including with the viceroyalty. See Pavel A. Pozhigailo, ed., *P.A. Stolypin: Perepiska* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004); idem., ed., *P.A. Stolypin, Grani talanta politika* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006).

⁴¹ Volkhonskii, *Rossii na Kavkaze. 5 vekov istorii*; Baberowski, 307-352; Vladislav P. Pliaskin, 'Gosudarstvennaia natsionalnaia politika Rossii na Kavkaze (1864-1917 gg.): Voenno-istoricheskii aspekt,'

The lack of interest in the changing relations between the Russian administration and its Armenians has to do with the immense interest shown in the foreign policy considerations in this period. This is hardly surprising considering the importance of the foreign policy imperatives on the eve of the war.⁴² Given its connection with the Russian road to the First World War, the revived Russian interest in the Armenian reforms in late 1912 was often explained by the diplomatic rivalry of the great powers in the Ottoman Empire.⁴³ Although the Russian foreign policy interests regarding the Ottoman Empire played a key role in this revived interest, the impact of the improved relations of the Tsarist regime and its own Armenians has been less scrutinized.

The changing Russian perception of its own Armenians (totalling more than a million people at the turn of the twentieth century), was a decisive factor as it was the continuous demands of the Russian Armenians regarding the Ottoman Armenians that prompted a more active Russian policy in late 1912. Given the state of the relations between the Russian administration and the Russian Armenians in the 1890s and its impact on Russia's indifference to the demands of the Ottoman Armenians, this was an important dimension. The interconnection between the Ottoman and Russian Armenians from the Russian perspective became even more obvious from 1912 on as Sazonov repeatedly underlined the importance of good relations with the Russian Armenians for his government as one of the key motivations for the Russian support for the reforms in the Ottoman Empire.

(PhD diss., Military Academy, 2003); Nicholas B. Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005).

⁴² Leaving aside the analytical focus, the availability of extensive published diplomatic correspondence on the origins of the First World War also played part in this inclination. The most widely consulted collections of diplomatic documents are Russia, Ministerstvo inostrannykh del, *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov: reformy v Armenii, 26 noiabria 1912 goda-10 maia 1914 goda* (hereafter *Reformy v Armenii*) (Petrograd: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1915); Mikhail N. Pokrovskii, ed., *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia v epokhu imperializma. Dokumenty iz arkhivov tsarskogo i vremennogo pravitelstv 1878-1917* (hereafter *MO*), 2nd and 3rd Series (Moscow; Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1931-1939); Mkrtich G. Nersisian, ed., *Genotsid armian v Osmanskoi imperii, sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Erevan: Aiastan, 1982); Peabody Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*, vol. 10 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936).

⁴³ The explanations provided for the ultimate Russian aims for initiating the Armenian reforms are usually quite vague but diverse, ranging from a direct Russian occupation of the Eastern Anatolia, or protectorate, to a more cautious policy, in which an ascending Russian influence over the Ottoman Empire was enough. Initially see, Roderic H. Davison, 'The Armenian Crisis, 1912-14,' *American Historical Review* 53, no. 3 (1948): 486-89; Somakian, 75.

This point has been raised by various scholars. The Russian support for the Armenian reforms was seen as a precautionary act in the wake of possible unrest among the Ottoman Armenians, which could spread across the border to the South Caucasus.⁴⁴ The most popular sources for this argument are the memoirs of the Russian diplomats (most notably Sazonov's *Fateful Years*) along with published diplomatic correspondence regarding the origins of the First World War.⁴⁵ However, these accounts did not further elaborate on the how and why these improved relations, which paved the way for the Russian decision in late 1912, changed between 1903 and 1912.

Biographies of the key personalities, such as Vorontsov-Dashkov and Stolypin, also shed light in the changing image of the Armenians in the eyes of the Russian authorities.⁴⁶ This was conspicuously the case for the viceroy, with his wide administrative authority in the periphery, which gave him more flexibility and power to influence Tsarist policy-making. However, apart from Ismail-Zade's important works, the role of the viceroy in the change of Russian attitude toward its Armenians often appears in the narratives in a superficial way. Called as 'the Armenophile viceroy,' Vorontsov-Dashkov's personal inclinations have been depicted as the main reason for the changing Russian relations with the Tsarist Armenians. Given the endless problems that the Armenians had under Vorontsov-Dashkov's predecessors, it is understandable that he has been considered by some scholars to be heavily inclined to favour the Armenians. However, to explain the

⁴⁴ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 31; Somakian, 46-47; Davison, 488; Arsen Avagyan 'İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti ile Ermeni Siyasi Partileri Arasındaki İlişkiler,' in *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki: İşbirliğinden Çatışmaya*, ed. Rober Koptaş (Istanbul: Aras, 2005), 122-23; Guenther Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 37; Pasdermajian, *Histoire de l'Arménie*, 400. See Chapter 5 for a more detailed discussion on this subject.

⁴⁵ See Sergei D. Sazonov, *Fateful Years, 1909-1916: The Reminiscences of Serge Sazonov* (London: Cape, 1928); Andrei N. Mandelstam, *La Société des Nations et les puissances devant le problème arménien* (Lausanne; Paris: Libraire Payot et cie., 1926).

⁴⁶ The number of biographical studies on Vorontsov-Dashkov is limited. See Vladimir N. Alekseev, *Grafy Vorontsovy i Vorontsovy-Dashkovy v istorii Rossii* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2002); Delia I. Ismail-Zade, *Graf I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: namestnik kavkazskii* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2005); idem., *I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: administrator, reformator* (St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia, 2008). By contrast, there are plenty of Stolypin biographies, as well as studies focusing on his policies, particularly in Russian. However, the Caucasus and the Armenians very briefly appear in these works. See Abraham Ascher, *P.A. Stolypin: The Search for Stability in Russia* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001); Mary S. Conroy, *Peter Arkadevich Stolypin, Practical Politics in Late Tsarist Russia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1976); Peter R. Waldron, *Between two Revolutions: Stolypin and the Politics of Renewal in Russia* (London: UCL Press, 1998); Dmitrii V. Tabachnik and Viktor Voronin, *Petr Stolypin: krestnyi put reformatora* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2012); Boris G. Fedorov, *Petr Stolypin: "Ia veriu v Rossiia"*, 2 vols (St. Petersburg: Limbus Press, 2002).

shift of Russian policies solely on his Armenophilism based on a few sources is very simplistic. Although I think the role of Vorontsov-Dashkov was very important, the evolution of his views on the design of Tsarist policy on the Armenians needs a deeper analysis.

Examining the process of Tsarist decision-making on the key questions in the South Caucasus, this study argues that the key Russian policies regarding the Russian Armenians were mainly the results of a rational decision-making process based on the deliberations between St. Petersburg and Tiflis rather than personal inclinations of the key individuals, like Vorontsov-Dashkov. For instance, the differences of opinion between St. Petersburg and Tiflis were displayed during the discussions regarding the status of the Armenian Church and the trial of the Dashnaktsutun. While the viceroy's suggestions prevailed thanks to the support rendered by the Foreign Ministry in the former case, his preference for a milder approach was overridden by the capital in the latter.

In the period from 1903 to 1914, the impact of the Armenian revolutionary parties, particularly the Dashnaks, on the situation of the Russian Armenians was also critical.⁴⁷ Maintaining a level of stability in the South Caucasus by 1907, the viceroyalty was alert about the Dashnaks, whose capabilities in the region raised eyebrows in St. Petersburg. Soon after, the Dashnaks were crushed in the South Caucasus with a mass trial between 1908 and 1912. Although there is no scholarly treatment of the trial process in the literature, there are some hints on the results of the final session.

⁴⁷ In line with the general situation in the Armenian historiography, the Dashnak organization and operations in the Russian Empire in this period have been studied far less than their activities in the Ottoman Empire. For partial exceptions to this, see Irada S. Bagirova, *Politicheskie partii i organizatsii Azerbaidzhana v nachale XX veka 1900-1917* (Baku: Elm, 1997); Geifman, *Thou Shalt Kill*; Oganessian, *Vek borby*; Hourri Berberian, *Armenians And The Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911: The Love for Freedom Has No Fatherland* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001). Regarding the activities of the Dashnaktsutun in the Ottoman Empire between 1907 and 1914, see Dikran Kaligian, *Armenian Organization and Ideology in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009); Gadiz F. Minassian, 'Les relations entre le Comité Union et Progrès et la Fédération Révolutionnaire Arménienne à la veille de la Première Guerre Mondiale d'après les sources arméniennes,' *Revue d'histoire arménienne contemporaine* 1 (1995): 45-99; Feroz Ahmad, 'Unionist Relations with the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire,' in *Christian and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 1, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meyer, 1982), 401-434.

The final session of this mass trial that started with ferocity produced a limited number of convicts. In the absence of studies drawing on the Russian documentation of the trial, scholars concluded that these light sentences were the result of a grand imperial policy change, implying interference from the Russian government, which demonstrated its interest in the reforms for the Ottoman Armenians in the same period.⁴⁸ Given how the Tsarist judiciary mechanism worked, such interference was not impossible; however such a claim needs more substantiation from the Russian official correspondence. In addition, since the trial has not been treated in its entirety in the literature, its achievements for the Tsarist regime have also been ignored. The trial successfully crushed the Dashnak organization in the South Caucasus and intimidated the Armenian clergy and the Armenian bourgeoisie, which made it easier for the Tsarist administration to get them on its side between 1907 and 1912.⁴⁹

An important source in this aspect, the papers of the Dashnaktsutjun trial (1908-1912), has not been utilized sufficiently to put the Russian stance into perspective. The papers of the official investigation process, which are held in the archives of the Hoover Institution, at Stanford University, are used in this study to investigate the fate of the Dashnaks in the Russian Empire.⁵⁰ These documents include detailed interrogations of party members, eyewitness accounts, official Russian correspondence, and Tsarist evaluation of the illegal material that was seized during police raids. These documents are vital for understanding the Tsarist perspective on the Dashnaktsutjun, given the fact that the number of scholarly studies on the history of the trial within the Russian context is virtually non-existent. The correspondence of various Okhrana (the Russian secret service) branches, located at GARF and SSSA, is also used to shed light on how the Tsarist policies regarding the Dashnaks were formulated during the trial process and its

⁴⁸ See for instance, Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 31; Dasnabedian, 94-95. A popular source of this claim was the memoirs of Kerensky, who was one of the lawyers of the Dashnaks. Aleksandr F. Kerensky, *The Kerensky Memoirs: Russia and History's Turning Point* (London: Cassell, 1966), 81.

⁴⁹ See chapter 2 for a more thorough review of the historiography and my own explanations.

⁵⁰ Hoover Institution Archives (HIA), Boris I. Nicolaevsky Collection (1801-1982) (hereafter Nic.), Series no. 197, Dashnaktsutjun, Armenian Revolutionary Party- Trial, Printed Records of the Trial. The citations in the thesis are given with series, box, folder and page numbers.

aftermath.⁵¹ The coverage of the trial by the influential newspapers in Tiflis and St. Petersburg was also added into the narrative to provide an alternative perspective.

From 1903 to 1912, the Tsarist regime's relations with the Armenian Church radically changed and these improved relations were strengthened further between 1912 and 1914. The image of Echmiadzin as a centre of anti-Russian subversion in 1903 was replaced by a loyal institution and the facilitator for the Russian interests both at home and abroad by 1914. As it was stated, the confiscation of 1903 and its aftermath until its annulment have been mentioned in the relevant historiography. However, the rest of the story is usually missing; although there are excellent exceptions to this, mainly by Tunian and Werth.⁵²

An analysis of the resolution of the tension between the imperial regime and the Armenian Church needs to be taken into account because of the influence of Echmiadzin on the Ottoman and Russian Armenians. Apart from the discussions among the Russian authorities regarding the status of the Catholicosate in the Russian Empire, the Dashnaktsutiun trial was part of this and needs to be added into the picture. One of the Tsarist motivations of launching such a mass trial had to do with weeding out the revolutionary elements within the Armenian clergy. In addition to the trial papers, the correspondence between St. Petersburg and Tiflis on the suspected clergymen, located at RGIA, is utilized for adding this dimension to the narrative.⁵³

Another important dimension of the Tsarist shift was about the upward trend in their relations with the Armenian bourgeoisie, particularly after the annulment of the confiscation decree in August 1905. In the post-revolutionary period, the viceroy saw this

⁵¹ The archival material regarding the vicerealty's policies in this period is held in the Georgian State Historical Archive (Sakartvelos sakhelmtsipo saistorio arkivi, hereafter SSSA) in Tbilisi—a vital but an under-used source in the treatment of the shift of Tsarist policy. The main exceptions to this are Stepan M. Akopian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia v planakh imperialisticheskikh derzhav v period pervoi mirovoi voyny* (Erevan: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk Armianskoi SSR, 1967); Ashot O. Arutiunian, *Kavkazskii front, 1914-1917 gg.* (Erevan: Aiastan, 1971); Georgii V. Pipiia, *Germanskii imperializm v Zakavkaze v 1910-1918 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978); Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*.

⁵² Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*; idem., *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*; Paul W. Werth, 'Glava tserkvi, poddannyi imperatora: Armianskii Katolikos na perekrestke vnutrennei i vneshnei politiki Imperii, 1828-1914,' *Ab Imperio* 3 (2006) 99-138. See also Arslan, who mainly relies on Ottoman archival material, which provides an alternative perspective. Ali Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı: Eçmiyazin Kilisesinde Stratejik Savaşlar* (Istanbul: Truva, 2005).

⁵³ This archive is very resourceful on the Tsarist regime's relations with the non-Orthodox faiths, including the Armenian Church. See primarily fond 821 (Ministerstvo vnutrennykh del: Departament dukhovnykh del inostrannykh ispovedanii (DDDII) (Department of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions).

element as a key ally of the viceroyalty and the stabilization process in the South Caucasus. Compared with the elite segments of the other nationalities, the Georgian and Azeri nobility, the Armenian bourgeoisie was far more prosperous and more in line with the general policies of the viceroyalty. From 1905 on, the improvement of the relations of the viceroyalty with the Armenian bourgeoisie, who again became a dominant force in local politics, has been noted in the literature, particularly in the Soviet historiography.⁵⁴

Increased cooperation between the viceroyalty and the Armenian bourgeoisie also benefitted from the problems of the viceroyalty with the Georgian and Azeri national movements in this period. The thorny relations of the viceroyalty with the Georgian national movement, which had the support of all segments within the Georgian community, have been put into perspective by several scholars on the subject.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, in the South Caucasus, the main concern of the viceroyalty, as well as the central government, increasingly became about the Azeris. Apart from the rising levels of politicization among them in the post-1905 era, what really vexed the Russian officials were their fears of a pan-Islamist movement, masterminded by the CUP.

The change of Tsarist perception of the most immediate threat in the region in this period was included in various studies, mainly based on the published reports of the viceroy to the Tsar.⁵⁶ From 1910 onward, a similar situation was also observed among the top Tsarist functionaries in the capital, who were disturbed by the machinations of the pan-Islamist emissaries against Russia. Examining the correspondence of the Okhrana

⁵⁴ Initially see Galust A. Galoian, *Rabochee dvizhenie i natsionalnyi vopros v Zakavkaze 1900-1922* (Erevan: Aiastan, 1969); Georgii A. Arutiunov, *Rabochee dvizhenie v Zakavkaze v period novogo revoliutsionnogo podema, 1910-1914 gg.* (Baku: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR, 1963); Bagrat A. Borian, *Armenii, mezhdunarodnaia diplomatiia i SSSR*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo, 1928). It must be noted that by large, Soviet accounts are equally critical of their treatment of the Armenian bourgeoisie, the Armenian Church and the Dashnaktsutun and their relations with the Tsarist regime.

⁵⁵ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*; David M. Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 1962); James W.R. Parsons, 'The Emergence and Development of the National Question in Georgia, 1801-1921,' (Ph.D. diss., University of Glasgow, 1987).

⁵⁶ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim Kraem*; idem., *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*. Mainly relying on these reports, several scholars spotted the growing suspicions of the viceroy regarding the pan-Islamist movement in the region and its impact on the worsening Russian perception of the Azeris. See initially Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1985), 71-2; Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 50-1.

bureaus in St. Petersburg, Tiflis, Baku and Istanbul and the discussions between the viceroyalty and the central government on the pan-Islamist threat, this study highlights the implications of the Russian fears of this threat in the South Caucasus, which went on even after the outbreak of the Great War.⁵⁷

The first chapter opens up with the lowest point in the relations between the Russian administration and its Armenian subjects, the Russian confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church in 1903. It explains how the total Armenian rebellion against the Russian authorities in the aftermath of this decision aggravated the unrest in the South Caucasus toward 1905. The rise of the Dashnaktsutiun with their leadership against the Tsarist authorities and the Azeris during 1905-1906 is also examined in this chapter. With the arrival of the viceroy in Tiflis and the gradual stabilization in the region, the Russian stance regarding the Russian Armenians was reformulated and the first chapter pays attention to this reformulation until 1907 and how it was affected by the views of the viceroyalty and the central government.

The second chapter deals with how the Tsarist authorities decided to eliminate the most urgent threat in the South Caucasus by 1907: the Dashnaktsutiun. The Tsarist response, mainly designed by St. Petersburg, was a mass political trial of the party, which initially crushed the Dashnak organization in the region and weeded out the Dashnak associates within the other political pillars. This chapter delineates how this was handled and why the Tsarist authorities slowed down once the party lost its hopes in the Russian Empire and the region was stabilized. Taking into account of the general improvement in the relations between the Russian administration and the Russian Armenians and the changing international factors toward 1912, this chapter traces the final phases of the trial and how the Dashnaktsutiun decided to not to antagonize Russia from then on, which was a major reversal of the party strategy compared with 1907.

The third chapter looks at the Tsarist policies to turn the Armenian Church into a subordinate and useful agent for its dealings with the Armenians at home and abroad from 1907 to 1912. In this period, there was a continuous difference of opinion between

⁵⁷ The relevant correspondence is held in GARF, RGIA and SSSA.

St. Petersburg and Tiflis as to how to handle this and this chapter draws upon these conflicting views to explain the formulation of Tsarist designs on the Armenian Church. In conjunction with the elimination of the Dashnaktsutun in the region as a political force, the Armenian Church had more reasons to be in better terms with the regime, which kept most of the religious and educational privileges of the church intact. Finally, this chapter relates the culmination of this upward trend at home to the increased concern of both the Russian government and the Catholicosate for the Ottoman Armenians by 1912.

The Tsarist response to the question of nationalities in the post-revolutionary South Caucasus and how this related to the changing relations of the viceroyalty with the Armenians, particularly with the Armenian bourgeoisie is the main theme of the fourth chapter. In this period, the Georgian national movement, as part of a broader Russian Social Democrats, annoyed the Russian authorities. However, the growing fears of a pan-Islamist movement in the South Caucasus orchestrated by Istanbul became the chief concern of the Tsarist authorities between 1907 and 1912. Against this background, this chapter dwells on the impact of the Russian concerns with the Georgians and Azeris on the Tsarist rapprochement with the Armenian bourgeoisie, a viable economic force with similar interests in political stability in the region.

By 1912, Russia had made its peace with the political pillars of the Russian Armenians. About the same time, changing international conditions, mainly centred on the possibility of an Ottoman collapse, brought about a more active Russian policy on the question of Armenian reforms in the Ottoman Empire. The fifth chapter demonstrates how restored relations between Russia and its Armenians made this possible and how, in turn, these relations were further improved between 1912 and 1914 because of the Russian concerns about the Ottoman Armenians. Accounting for these concerns as part of grander Russian foreign policy interests about the Ottoman Empire, this chapter sheds light on the link between these interests and the Russian domestic priorities in the South Caucasus.

CHAPTER 1

THE RUSSIAN ARMENIANS IN THE SEA OF TROUBLES: FROM CONFISCATION TO REVOLUTION (1903–1907)

Introduction

In September 1903, the vice-governor of Erevan, Prince Nakashizde arrived in Echmiadzin accompanied by the police and troops to implement the measures of confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church. Supported by his flock, the Catholicos and other higher-ranking clergymen resisted. Initially, Nakashizde could not convince any of the clergymen to sign the official papers which were needed to start the actual confiscation process. However, a few weeks later the Catholicos had to yield in and the confiscation measures started. Meanwhile, Golitsyn was busy ordering the exile of some uncooperative Armenian clergymen.⁵⁸ A few weeks later, when Golitsyn was returning with his wife from a visit to the Botanical Gardens in Tiflis, his carriage was stopped by a few locals posing as petitioners. In fact, they were three Hnchaks assassins with hidden daggers. The assassins failed to murder Golitsyn, who was wounded in the head and hand. By a chase, the attackers were killed or captured.⁵⁹ Golitsyn was the target of this attack because of his role in a decision that marked the lowest point in Russian-Armenian relations since 1828: the Tsarist decision to confiscate the Armenian Church properties.

⁵⁸ Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*, 321-2.

⁵⁹ Aleksei N. Kuropatkin, *Dnevnik generala A.N. Kuropatkina*, ed. Oleg R. Airapetov (Moscow: Gosudarstvennaia publichnaia istoricheskaia biblioteka Rossii, 2010), 183; 'Mestnyi otdel,' *Tiflisskii listok*, 15 October 1904 [28 October 1904]; Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 311. Golitsyn could escape the assassination attempt thanks to the chain-mail vest he wore on the day of the assault. Simon S. Montefiore, *Young Stalin* (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 2008), 139; Geifman, 111.

Often called an ‘Armenophobe’, Golitsyn had a major role in this contentious affair.⁶⁰ A member of the famous Golitsyn family, the Prince was no stranger to the Caucasus.⁶¹ After serving as a senator and a member of the State Council, he arrived in Tiflis in 1896 to solve Russia’s Armenian question once and for all. It is true that Golitsyn, with his strong dislike of national movements, stubbornly insisted on more extreme measures on the Armenian Church despite the opposition by various concerned parties in St. Petersburg. In Golitsyn’s reports to the capital, the Armenian national movement appeared to be the most troublesome element to be dealt with in the Caucasus. Perhaps the sense of urgency intensified with Golitsyn, but in essence he was by no means different from his predecessors regarding his standpoint on the activities of the Armenian Church and its revolutionary links.

Golitsyn’s predecessors, Dondukov-Korsakov and Sergei A. Sheremetev, had already pointed out that there was a rising danger of an Armenian revolutionary movement, the centre of which was the Armenian Church.⁶² Coupled with the growing instability in the Caucasus in the late 1890s, the continuous mistrust of the Armenian Church by top Tsarist administrators in the region persuaded many in the capital that more decisive steps had to be taken. As soon as Golitsyn arrived in the region, he informed St. Petersburg about the nefarious designs of the Armenian Church and the urgent need to curb its influence. Golitsyn’s plans were put into effect immediately, particularly concerning the privileges of the Armenian Church in education.⁶³

In a series of measures, the Armenian Church was first deprived of its right to administer Armenian parish schools, which were put under the Ministry of Education. Golitsyn also believed that Armenian Church properties related to the parish schools had to be

⁶⁰ Suny, ‘Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule,’ 132; Ter Minassian, ‘Le mouvement révolutionnaire arménien,’ 545; Edouard Aknouni, *Political Persecution, Armenian Prisoners of the Caucasus* (New York: 1911), 28. In a similar vein, for Soviet historians, it was one of those policies of the ‘reactionary Tsarist regime,’ which did not need further elaboration.

⁶¹ He fought in the wars against the mountaineers in the 1860s and served as a commander in the grenadier corps stationed in the Caucasus for nearly 20 years.

⁶² Memorandum of the High Commissioner of the Caucasus, S.A. Sheremetev to the Tsar, December 1895, in Diakin, 454-455; Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*, 99.

⁶³ Statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding the confiscation of the properties of the Armenian-Gregorian Church in Russia from the authority of ecclesiastical establishment, March 1900, in Diakin, 768-70.

transferred to the Ministry, which would further restrict the area of influence of the Armenian Church. Although there was an attempt to do this as early as 1898, it failed as the Armenian Church filed a lawsuit based on its legal ownership of the premises.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, several Armenian charitable institutions and libraries were closed and the Armenian press was put under severe pressure in an effort to stop the Armenian nationalist movement.⁶⁵

However, Golitsyn's conviction about more heavy-handed measures against the Armenian Church intensified as the region was being shaken by a series of strikes and general discontent. By 1901, Golitsyn again addressed the necessity of imposing economic sanctions on the Armenian Church, which he considered one of the key sources of discontent in the South Caucasus. When a special committee led by Eduard V. Frisch, chairman of the legislative department of the State Council, met in 1901 about the situation of the Armenian Church, Golitsyn's earlier suggestions concerning the transfer of Armenian Church properties and its right to run the parish schools were again in the agenda. Although his proposal did not take effect in 1901, it became the subject of debate for both Tiflis and St. Petersburg for the next two years as the situation in the South Caucasus became more serious.⁶⁶ As Golitsyn's pleas for more radical measures found more supporters in the capital, another meeting of ministers in 1903 would determine the fate of the governance of the Armenian Church in the Russian Empire.

The Confiscation of the Properties of the Armenian Church (1903)

When various ministers and Golitsyn met in 1903 to reconsider the idea of confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church, Golitsyn had a major ally: the Minister of

⁶⁴ Erkanian, 33; Edward H. Judge, *Plehve: Repression and Reform in Imperial Russia, 1902-1904* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1983), 188-89; Kuleshov, 98; Volkhonskii, 108; A.M. Arutiunian, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Armenii 1905-1907 gg.* (Erevan: Aiastan, 1970), 55.

⁶⁵ Galoian, 33. Another symbolic but an important restriction was imposed in the way of banning the erection of statues about non-Russian history, or naming streets with Armenian historical figures. Sarkisyanz, 143-44.

⁶⁶ Judge, 118-9; Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*, 268-70.

Internal Affairs, Viacheslav K. von Plehve. A staunch supporter of the Romanov dynasty and a former director of the Department of Police, he was the type of bureaucrat that Nicholas II entrusted to fight against revolutionary fervour.⁶⁷ He had no sympathy for any sort of national movement and he started the Russification drive in the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1899, which turned quite violent in the following years. By all accounts, his tenure as the Minister of Internal Affairs (1902-1904) saw a rise in serious instances of oppression of the empire's national minorities. Hated by all revolutionaries, his indifference towards the Jewish pogroms in April 1903 in Kishinev was noted by various contemporary critics.⁶⁸

As Golitsyn's earlier idea was again on the table in 1903, Plehve immediately approved of it. As the Minister of Internal Affairs, Plehve's approval was of paramount importance to get the support of the Tsar.⁶⁹ Backed by Plehve and a few other ministers, Golitsyn's proposal was aimed at confiscating both the immovable properties and cash holdings of the Armenian Church and the transfer of its rights in education to the Ministry of Education. The proponents of this measure were completely aware that this would create discontent among the Armenians, which would worsen the fragile situation in the Caucasus—so why did they continue to press for it?

In his memoirs, Sazonov notes that the 1903 confiscation was carried out because of a suspicion that the Armenian Church might be used for revolutionary purposes.⁷⁰ In fact, by 1903, most of the proponents of the confiscation were past the suspicion phase. The main reason for the insistence by the Golitsyn and Plehve camp was grounded in their firm belief that the Armenian Church was accommodating Armenian revolutionaries and promoting Armenian nationalism with its privileged status in cultural matters. For them,

⁶⁷ Fredric S. Zuckerman, *The Tsarist Secret Police in Russian Society, 1880-1917* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 85.

⁶⁸ Judge, 93-4; Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988), 54; Sergei Iu. Witte, *Vospominaniia. Tsarstvovanie Nikolaia II*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Slovo, 1922), 193-94.

⁶⁹ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 1, 187-88; Judge, 119.

⁷⁰ Sazonov, *Fateful Years*, 140.

the Armenian Church was supporting the Armenian national movement, which had ‘political independence’ as its final objective.⁷¹

According to Tsarist reports, from the late 1890s on, the Armenian Church increasingly supported the Armenian revolutionaries, particularly in their struggle against the Ottoman Empire, which in turn revolutionized the Russian Armenians.⁷² To support the struggle against the Ottoman Empire, revolutionary committees were formed in the Caucasus under the leadership of the Armenian clergy although they were not active against Russia by then. Meanwhile, the revolutionaries managed to infiltrate into Echmiadzin as a close associate of Khrimian (a clergyman with strong revolutionary inclinations) was an eminent member of the Armenian revolutionary groups. The members of the Armenian clergy were largely considered by the Russian administration in the Caucasus to be affiliated with the revolutionary nationalism, which they used to agitate Russian Armenians, particularly in cities with large Armenian populations. According to the former procurator of the Echmiadzin Synod, the confiscation decision was proposed as a measure against ‘the greed and plunder of the Armenian clergy when it was established that huge sums of the Church income went to the hopes of revolution.’⁷³

Relying on his links with the Armenian revolutionaries and his autonomous status, the Catholicos was displaying open signs of disobedience in 1899 when he did not comply with the act regarding the obligatory oath in Russian for non-Orthodox subjects working in government service.⁷⁴ For the Russian administration in the Caucasus, the insubordinate attitude of the Armenian Church did not only disrupt the order in the region, but it also damaged ‘the prestige of the government in the eyes of the Armenians and generally the non-Russian population.’⁷⁵ For Golitsyn, in a region that was infested with student and worker unrest, Russia had ‘only one malicious and irreconcilable

⁷¹ Memorandum of the High Commissioner of the Caucasus, G.S. Golitsyn, 1 December 1902 [14 December 1902], in Diakin, 464-5; Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*, 307-8; Suny, ‘Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule,’ 134.

⁷² Witte, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 1, 187; *Polozhenie 11 Marta 1836 goda i Echmiadzinskie Katolikosy pod Russkim vladychestvom. Istoricheskii ocherk* (Tiflis, 1904) in SSSA, f. 13, o. 11, d. 103, l. 62, 56-58. The page numbers quoted after the list no. are from this official publication’s original pagination.

⁷³ Ibid.; HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2659.

⁷⁴ SSSA, f. 13, o. 11, d. 103, l. 62, 55.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 58-9.

enemy: It was the Armenians.’⁷⁶ Plehve was in agreement with the reports coming from the Caucasus pointing out the problems created by the status of the Armenian Church as he argued that it should be stripped of its autonomy and privileges just like the Georgian Church was with the advent of Russian rule.⁷⁷ To sort this problem out, what was needed was a radical measure that would help break ‘the soul of opposition’ demonstrated by the Armenian clergy and ‘render its separatist dreams harmless.’⁷⁸ The act of confiscation would be a step in that direction.

Another motive of the proponents of the confiscation act was the negative influence on Armenian youth by the Armenian schools run by the church. The teachings of the Armenian clergy were considered to have the most influence on the Armenian students by promoting the national uniqueness of the Armenians and their political dreams.⁷⁹ This view was also advocated by Armenophobe publicists like Velichko, who claimed that the Armenian parish schools as well as seminaries were hotbeds of Armenian nationalism.⁸⁰ By taking away the Armenian Church’s rights to administer these schools and their properties, this harmful influence would be eliminated. Moreover, new Russian state schools for Armenian students could be funded by the income of the properties of the Armenian Church.⁸¹ This move, in a sense, would help the official cultural Russification policy.⁸²

Plehve and Golitsyn were ready to dismiss the opposition centred on the implications of such an act on Russian foreign policy interests. According to them, so far Russia had not benefitted as expected from the Catholicos’ influence on the Ottoman Armenians because of the self-interest of the Catholicosate.⁸³ Perhaps it was time for Russia to abandon being the patron of Ottoman Armenians because once their ideas of a ‘Great Armenia’ were materialized by revolutionary means, they would be ‘inevitably directed against Russian

⁷⁶ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2659-60.

⁷⁷ Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*, 311-2; Diakin, 774-5.

⁷⁸ SSSA, f. 13, o. 11, d. 103, l. 62, 60.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁸⁰ Velichko, 99-101.

⁸¹ Hans Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernization and Revolution: 1881-1917* (London: Longman, 1983), 195; Sarkisyanz, 163.

⁸² Dasnabedian, 70; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 18.

⁸³ SSSA, f. 13, o. 11, d. 103, l. 62, 60; Diakin, 774-5.

interests.’⁸⁴ Therefore, Golitsyn and Plehve believed that any negative implication of the confiscation act on Russian foreign policy interests would be compensated by the greater benefits it would bring to the domestic sphere.

Rather disingenuously, Plehve and other supporters of the confiscation act publicly noted that it would in fact benefit the Armenians and the Armenian Church. The vast properties of the Armenian Church, which were badly managed by the Armenian clergy, would be run more efficiently by the central government. Moreover, the Armenian Church would also be relieved of its educational responsibilities. As a result, instead of affiliating themselves with political and educational matters, the Armenian clergy could concentrate their efforts and time on purely religious matters—thought to be the ideal situation by Golitsyn and Plehve.⁸⁵

The proposal put forward by Golitsyn and Plehve met with strong opposition from other participants at the meeting, most notably by premier Witte, who had a better idea about the Caucasus than most of the top officials in St. Petersburg. Born and raised in Tiflis where his father served in the Caucasian viceroyalty, Witte knew about the importance the Armenians attached to their church, which he described as ‘the soul of the Armenian life in which all charity and education of the nation was concentrated.’⁸⁶ Witte and other ministers, including the arch-reactionary Pobedonovtsev, noted that the proposed measures would only create more anti-government sentiments among the Armenians and the Armenian clergy and ‘then the idea of resistance could concern those layers of the Armenian population who had submitted to the orders of the authorities.’⁸⁷ The opponents believed that such an extreme act could easily radicalize the whole Armenian community in the South Caucasus, where the situation was already chaotic.⁸⁸

The opposition to the confiscation act also had a foreign policy dimension. Rejecting Plehve’s dismissal of the potential benefits of the Catholicosate for Russian foreign

⁸⁴ Diakin, 774-5.

⁸⁵ Simon Vratzian, ‘The Armenian Revolution and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Part 2),’ *The Armenian Review* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1950): 58; Velichko, 99-101; Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*, 333; Judge, 119.

⁸⁶ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 1, 187; Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*, 310.

⁸⁷ RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 2, ll. 79, ob.

⁸⁸ Werth, ‘Glava Tserkvi, Poddannyi Imperatora,’ 125; Kuleshov, 98.

policy interests, Russian Foreign Minister Lamsdorf pointed out that Russia could not risk alienating the Catholicos, who had considerable influence on the Armenians in the Ottoman and Persian empires.⁸⁹ If confiscation was enacted, Echmiadzin's ecumenical significance and influence abroad would be reduced, which would mean a loss of an important asset for Russian foreign policy imperatives in the Ottoman and Persian Empires. At the end of the meeting, the majority of the participants (12 against 5) were against the confiscation.⁹⁰

Trusting his like-minded Minister of Internal Affairs and the High Commissioner of the Caucasus, in June 1903, Nicholas II approved the decree despite the majority's decision. One of the opponents, Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich, begged the Tsar to reconsider his decision but to no avail.⁹¹ With the decree, the administration of the Armenian Church properties and capital was put under the responsibility of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture. Technically, the Armenian Church kept ownership of its holdings but was barred from governing the income from them.⁹²

Under the decree, the Armenian Church was deprived of its rights to supervise its parish schools, which were transferred to the Ministry of Education.⁹³ The jurisdiction of the Armenian Church was restricted to the properties essential for basic religious services which would be funded by the government.⁹⁴ The decree was the end of an era with regard to Russian-Armenian relations as it meant the end of the statute of 1836. Contrary to what Golitsyn and Plehve expected, the decision triggered a total Armenian resistance to the Tsarist regime, which would only worsen the situation in the troubled Caucasus.

⁸⁹ Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*, 308-9.

⁹⁰ Those who voted for the confiscation were Golitsyn, Plehve, Fedor K. Avelan, Grigorii E. Zenger, and Petr A. Frolov. Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich, Grand Duke Aleksandr Mikhailovich, Witte, Pobedonostsev, Frisch, Nikolai M. Chikhachov, Nikolai N. Gerard, Ermolov, Pavel L. Lobko, Kokovtsov, Prince Valerian S. Obolenskii-Neledinskii-Meletskii, Viktor A. Miasoedov-Ivanov, and Sergei S. Manukhin voted against. RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 2, l. 79.

⁹¹ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 1, 188.

⁹² SSSA, f. 13, o. 11, d. 103, l. 62, 58.

⁹³ Judge, 119; Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*, 310; Khachatur Dadaian, *Armiane i Baku (1850-ye gg-1920 g.)* (Erevan: Noravank, 2007), 76-7.

⁹⁴ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 18; Vratzian, 'The Armenian Revolution and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Part 2),' 58.

The Armenian Reaction to the Tsarist Decision (1903–1905)

‘Never have he, nor his clergy, nor his flock, thought of disobeying You, the Lord’s Anointed.’⁹⁵ So wrote the Catholicos in a petition to the Tsar just after the approval of the act of confiscation. Understandably, the Catholicos also demanded an audience with the Tsar.⁹⁶ When the Catholicos received the news of approval of the confiscation act, he immediately ordered the Echmiadzin Synod and the Armenian clergy not to comply.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, the Armenian masses were displaying their displeasure with the decision and their support for their church. From June 1903 onward, demonstrations were held by Armenians in several cities in the South Caucasus with escalating anger. Supporting the Catholicos’ acts of resistance, the demonstrators began to confront the Russian troops who were sent to quell the unrest.

The protests in Echmiadzin, Aleksandropol, Elizavetpol, and Tiflis, among other places, ended with a large number of casualties. In Elizavetpol, the police who came to disperse the protestors were met with ‘a shower of stones and shots’ and then retaliated, resulting in seven deaths and 27 wounded among the protestors.⁹⁸ On the pages of *Iskra*, the scenes from the conflict between the protestors and the Russian troops (accompanied by the artillery) were considered to be ‘completely like in the time of war.’⁹⁹ The Armenian unrest coincided with strikes in Baku; 11 protestors died and 65 of them were wounded.¹⁰⁰

By September 1903, Catholicos Khrimian was still hoping to get an audience with the Tsar. By the time his demand was denied, Khrimian had already received orders from St.

⁹⁵ Victor Berard, *The Russian Empire and Czarism* (London: D. Nutt, 1905), 201-03.

⁹⁶ Judge, 119.

⁹⁷ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 92; Vratzian, ‘The Armenian Revolution and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Part 2),’ 60; Golitsyn to the Minister of Internal Affairs, 25 August 1903 [7 September 1903], in Diakin, 776.

⁹⁸ Galoian, 35-6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰⁰ Anahide Ter Minassian, ‘Aux origines du marxisme arménien: Les spécifistes,’ *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 19, no. 1 (1978): 74; Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 92; Vratzian, ‘The Armenian Revolution and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Part 2),’ 61-2.

Petersburg to comply—otherwise more serious measures would follow.¹⁰¹ Khrimian told the Russian officials that the properties of the Armenian Church belonged not only to Russian Armenians but to all Armenians in the world and their seizure would be unlawful.¹⁰² The resistance of the Catholicos continued for a while but soon it ended and the measures of confiscation were implemented.

Soon after the approval of the decree in June 1903, the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul along with the Patriarchates in Jerusalem and Sis had petitioned Nicholas II through the Russian ambassador in Istanbul. They demanded the annulment of the confiscation decree because the properties of the Armenian Church belonged to Armenians all over the world.¹⁰³ A similar petition by the congress of Armenian bishops in Istanbul was also forwarded to St. Petersburg but all these pleas fell on deaf ears.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, the Armenian clergy in Echmiadzin began to entertain the idea of moving the Catholicosate to the Ottoman Empire, for which the Catholicos asked for an audience with Abdulhamid II.¹⁰⁵ The Armenian backlash to the decision of confiscation was carefully monitored by the Ottoman consulate in Tiflis and it was reported in the summer of 1903 that a cautious policy was necessary.¹⁰⁶ In the end, the proposal was rejected by Abdulhamid II, possibly to avoid complicating relations with Tsarist Russia when the Ottoman Empire had its own internal problems.¹⁰⁷

The reaction showed by the Armenian clergy infuriated Golitsyn. As a solution, he proposed to move the Armenian clergy from Echmiadzin and Tiflis to further reduce their influence.¹⁰⁸ One of the possible provinces where these clergymen could be exiled was Kutaisi province, a predominantly Georgian region and, subsequently, some of these

¹⁰¹ Judge, 119.

¹⁰² Alexander Ular, *Russia from Within* (New York: Henry Holt and co., 1905), 215-218; Villari, 155-7.

¹⁰³ The report of the chancellery of the viceroy, 18 July 1905 [31 July 1905], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 2, l. 60-60 ob.

¹⁰⁴ Tunian, *Patriarshestvo Khrimiana*, 328-9.

¹⁰⁵ Ali Arslan, 'II. Meşrutiyet Öncesinde Osmanlı-Eçmiyazın Katogigosluğu İlişkileri,' in *Ermeni Araştırmaları 1. Türkiye Kongresi Bildirileri*, vol. 1, eds. Şenol Kantarcı et al. (Ankara: ASAM, Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayınları, 2003), 353.

¹⁰⁶ Translation Office of the Sublime Porte, 25 Eylül 1319 [8 October 1903], doc. no. 47, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Rus İlişkileri*, vol. 2, 104-05.

¹⁰⁷ Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı*, 89-90; idem., 'II. Meşrutiyet Öncesinde Osmanlı-Eçmiyazın Katogigosluğu İlişkileri,' 353.

¹⁰⁸ The report of the Minister of Internal Affairs to the Tsar, 26 December 1903 [8 January 1904], doc. no. 16, in Heydarov, vol. 1, 525.

clergymen were exiled.¹⁰⁹ Even though the Golitsyn-led initiative against the Armenian Church backfired and created more troubles for the Tsarist administration, Golitsyn had no change of heart regarding the Armenian Church. In a correspondence with Plehve in May 1904, Golitsyn still argued that the Catholicosate was the centre of Armenian revolutionary movement.¹¹⁰

As the pleas of the Armenian clergy produced no results, the Armenian unrest was making things even more difficult for the Russian administration in the Caucasus. A witness noted that the scenes created by the Armenian antagonism to the Tsarist decision were similar to those in revolutionary France in the 1790s when the state confiscated the properties of the church.¹¹¹ In their defence of the church, the Armenians continued to show signs of resistance against state officials. What the confiscation act accomplished was the opposite of what Plehve and Golitsyn envisioned because it turned even the loyal segments of the Armenian population against the Russian government.¹¹²

Apart from mass demonstrations, other types of insubordination followed. Many Armenian families boycotted Russian state schools and sent their children to Armenian parochial schools, which were run on voluntary donations.¹¹³ It was reported that the Russian Armenians were also unwilling to pay taxes to the Russian administration.¹¹⁴ The Armenian discontent was making the situation in the Caucasus even worse as Golitsyn's popularity among the people in the Caucasus was plummeting. According to Kuropatkin, who was worried about the acts of insubordination and desertion among the Armenian soldiers, the Caucasus was on the verge of rebellion by the end of 1903.¹¹⁵ The Armenians' response became more intense as they burned portraits of the Tsar in one of their February 1904 demonstrations.¹¹⁶ The Armenian protests were not limited to the

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 526-27.

¹¹⁰ Aleksandr V. Ostrovskii, *Kto stoial za spinoi Stalina* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2004), 521-522.

¹¹¹ Sergei S. Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie imperatora Nikolaia II*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Izdanie obshchestva rasprostraneniia Russkoi natsionalnoi i patrioticheskoi literatury, 1935), 208.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Aleksei K. Dzhivelegov, *Armiane v Rossii* (Moscow: Trud i volia, 1906), 35; Sarkisyanz, 146.

¹¹⁴ Vratzian, 'The Armenian Revolution and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Part 2),' 63; 'Russia and the Armenian Church,' *The Times*, 15 September 1903.

¹¹⁵ Kuropatkin, 205.

¹¹⁶ Galoian, 46.

South Caucasus as the Armenian reaction to the Tsarist decision made an impression on the Persian Armenians as reported by the Russian diplomatic corps in the area.¹¹⁷

When the confiscation decree was on the table in 1903, Plehve asserted that it would be reasonable not to expect unfavourable reaction from the Armenian population. The only opposing segments would be the higher clergy and secular figures that ‘put themselves the aim of fight against the existing state structure.’¹¹⁸ Perhaps Plehve and Golitsyn believed that it would be feasible to suppress a small church as *fait accompli* as they did with the Georgian Autocephalous Church in 1811. However, nearly 90 years later, the national solidarity of the Armenians, unique nature of their religion and language, and, most importantly, a more literate, urban, and mobile population spearheaded by revolutionary parties, particularly the Dashnaktsutjun, proved to be a stumbling block. The next two years demonstrated that they were off the mark as the Armenian response was explosive.

The Response of the Dashnaks to the Decree of Confiscation

Until 1903, the most capable Armenian revolutionary party, the Dashnaktsutjun stayed away from operating in Russian territory believing that a two-front war was a bad idea. The Hnchaks were also operating mainly in the Ottoman Empire, though with much less efficiency and following. After the Tsarist insistence on the decision, these two leading Armenian revolutionary organizations openly manifested their support for the Armenian Church. Perhaps the only exception was the response of some of the Armenian Social Democrats (SDs). An eminent Armenian SD, Knunians was ecstatic as the confiscation was carried out: ‘The Tsar declared war on the Church! Bless you; let these two true enemies of the labouring masses beat each other.’¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 41.

¹¹⁸ Diakin, 774-5.

¹¹⁹ Genrikh Ts. Liloian, *Natsionalnyi vopros v armianskoi bolshevistkoi publitsistike (1904-1914 gg.)*(Erevan: Aiastan, 1967), 35.

As the strongest Armenian revolutionary party, the Dashnak attitude was quite interesting since it had always been very critical of the Armenian clergy and religion in general. Many of its members believed that the Armenian Church was an ‘inert institution.’¹²⁰ The conservative stance of the church and its inclusion within the Tsarist administrative scheme was harshly criticized. However, after June 1903, despite their differences, the church and revolutionaries came together. An Armenian revolutionary, Ruben Ter Minasian, recalled that from June 1903, Khrimian was not just the Catholicos but also ‘the leader’ of all Armenians irrespective of their revolutionary faction or religious affiliation.¹²¹ When the news about the approval of the confiscation decree reached Echmiadzin, the Dashnaks encouraged the Catholicos not to comply with the orders and declared their full support for resistance.¹²² The Catholicos was glad about the support of the Dashnaks, who praised Khrimian for his ‘heroic’ and ‘truly-national’ actions against the Tsarist authorities.¹²³

Despite their general disapproval of religion, the Dashnaks considered the Tsarist decision of confiscation an oppressive measure against the Armenians. Symbolically important, the Armenian Church survived under a number of vast empires and preserved the Armenian religion and language for a long time. The Armenian Church was a national church and it represented both nation and religion for the Russian Armenians. As Miliukov pointed out, the confiscation act was seen as a Tsarist attack on the ‘last refuge of their [Armenians’] nationality, their supreme hope of better future: their national school and the material resources of their national church.’¹²⁴ Therefore, it was not very surprising to see that the Dashnaks, whose nationalist ideas were obvious, came for Echmiadzin’s help against the Tsarist act, which threatened one of the cornerstones of the Armenian national identity.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Libaridian, ‘Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaktsutjun,’ 194.

¹²¹ Rouben Ter Minasian, *Memoires d'un partisan arménien: fragments*, trans. W. Ter Minassian (La Tour d'Aigues: Éditions de l'aube, 1990), 28.

¹²² Dasnabedian, 70; Simon Payaslian, *The History of Armenia: From the Origins to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 121; Suny, ‘Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule,’ 134.

¹²³ SSSA, f. 13, o. 11, d. 103, l. 62, 59; Payaslian, 122.

¹²⁴ Pavel Miliukov, *Russia and Its Crisis* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1905), 503-4.

¹²⁵ It was no coincidence that during the first generation of the Armenian national revival, famous Armenian national poet Raphael Patkanian and novelist Raffi had many anti-clerical elements in their

As the confiscation was carried out, the Dashnaks quickly stepped in. They already had party cells in the South Caucasus; to coordinate them for the struggle against Tsarist authorities, a central Committee for Armenian Self-Defence (later renamed the Responsible Body for the Caucasus) in Tiflis was formed.¹²⁶ Dashnak publications harshly criticized the Russian authorities for their treatment of the Armenian Church. It was decided to discuss the next steps of the party in Russia during the third world congress of the party in Sofia, which started in February 1904. Manifesting 'The Plan of Action for the Caucasus,' the Dashnaks openly announced their dislike of the Tsarist regime. Furthermore, they added the liberation of the Armenians of Tsarist Russia as a part of the federal system in the South Caucasus to their programme.¹²⁷ Another important resolution of the congress was the adoption of self-defence of the Russian Armenians for which acts of terror, mass demonstrations and various types of propaganda would be used.¹²⁸

After the failed assassination attempt on Golitsyn by the Hnchaks in October 1903, the assassination of Plehve by a member of the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) in July 1904 was music to the ears of the Dashnaks.¹²⁹ Soon, they began to take matters into their hands in the South Caucasus. Several Tsarist officials of varying ranks were now the targets of the Dashnak-led Committee for Armenian Self-Defence. Among the casualties were the vice-governor of Elizavetpol, Andreev; the police superintendent of Shusha, Sakharov; Colonel Bykov; and Prefect Boguslavski.¹³⁰ The procurator of the Echmiadzin Synod, Frenkel, was fortunate enough to escape the assassins' bullets more than once.¹³¹

works. Kevork B. Bardakjian, *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature, 1500- 1920* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2000), 140-46.

¹²⁶ Dasnabedian, 70-2.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 43.

¹²⁸ Anahide Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement (1887-1912)* (Cambridge: Zorian Institute, 1984), 41; Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911*, 78.

¹²⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 19.

¹³⁰ Dasnabedian, 70; B. Gaibov, *Dashnaki: iz materialov departamenta politzii* (Baku: "Kommunist", 1990), 11; Vratzian, 'The Armenian Revolution and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Part 2),' 64; Antranig Chalabian, *Dro (Drastamat Kanayan): Armenia's First Defense Minister of the Modern Era* (Los Angeles: Indo-European Publishing, 2009), 22-3; Judge, 216.

¹³¹ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2560.

Another important decision made in the Sofia congress concerned collaboration with other revolutionary parties.¹³² For their struggle against the Tsarist regime, the Dashnak cells were allowed to collaborate with the Hnchaks and other revolutionary organizations.¹³³ The dispersed condition of the Dashnak committees in the South Caucasus and the need for logistic support from other parties for their struggle against the Tsarist response were the main reasons for this.¹³⁴ Among the broader Russian revolutionary organizations, the SRs responded most positively to the call of the Dashnaks since their methods and ideology were quite similar.¹³⁵ Soon, the SRs began to support the Dashnaks by helping them out with the purchase and transfer of arms to the Caucasus.¹³⁶

As the economic crisis in the empire deepened and the South Caucasus was shaken by strikes, particularly in Baku and Batumi, the Dashnaks knew that the increased impact of organized labour had to be taken into account. Previously, the Dashnaksutun was a party with mainly nationalist inclinations and had little sympathy for the internationalist approach of the socialist movement. It even discouraged Armenian workers from entering into the worker strikes held in the Russian Empire prior to 1903 fearing they would join other broader Russian parties.¹³⁷

However, after June 1903, the Dashnaks knew that closer relations with the socialist movement would benefit their struggle against the Russian administration. In such an atmosphere, restrictive measures on its members, such as forbidding them to participate in joint strikes or demonstrations, would only drive them away. During the congress in Sofia, it was decided to allow party members to take part in strikes.¹³⁸ Based on the

¹³² Dasnabedian, 71-2; Gaibov, 10.

¹³³ Dasnabedian, 71-72.

¹³⁴ Ter Minassian, 'Le mouvement révolutionnaire arménien,' 559.

¹³⁵ Naira B. Kirakosian, 'Sozdanie i deiatelnost partii "Dashnaksutun" (1890-1907 gg.),' in *Istoriia natsionalnykh politicheskikh partii Rossii*, eds. Aleksandr I. Zevelev and Valentin V. Shelokhaev (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1997), 179; Geifman, 185.

¹³⁶ Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911*, 85.

¹³⁷ Suny, 'Eastern Armenians under Tsarist rule,' 133; Razmik Panossian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), 211. As a result, the participation of the Armenian workers in the trade unions in the South Caucasus remained quite low. Ronald G. Suny, 'A Journeyman for the Revolution: Stalin and the Labour Movement in Baku, June 1907-May 1908,' *Soviet Studies* 23, no. 3 (January 1972): 379.

¹³⁸ Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism*, 41; Suny, 'Eastern Armenians under Tsarist rule,' 134.

general economic difficulties and the position of the church, this move enabled the party to increase its appeal to Armenian workers.¹³⁹ As a result, other socialist groups, the SRs and Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDWP), were able to recruit smaller numbers of Armenians into their ranks during these years.¹⁴⁰

The recently started war with Japan further intensified the cooperation of Dashnaks with other disgruntled parties. An important event in that aspect was the conference of opposition parties held in Paris in November 1904 to assemble a coordinated body to resist the Tsarist regime. The Dashnaks attended the conference along with the Kadets, the SRs, the Polish National League, the Finnish Active Resistance Party, the Georgian Socialist-Federalist Party, and the Latvian Social Democratic Labour Party.¹⁴¹ The Dashnaks, like all other participants, were defeatists in the war with Japan, and supported the decisions of this congress, which called for the overthrow of autocratic rule.¹⁴²

In August 1904, St. Petersburg was rejoicing at the birth of the Tsarevich Aleksei, while nearly all parts of the Russian Empire were suffering from grave troubles. The French Ambassador to St. Petersburg reported to Paris that a general explosion was possible in the Russian Empire.¹⁴³ The situation in the South Caucasus was particularly alarming with the rising strength of organized labour demonstrated by several strikes during that period. It was no coincidence that the first collective labour agreement in the Russian Empire was signed in Baku in December 1904 after a general strike led by Shchendrikov.¹⁴⁴

The Armenian reaction to the confiscation decree further worsened the situation in the region. In addition to the resistance demonstrated by the Armenian clergy and the masses, the Dashnaktsutiun stepped in and began to lead the Armenian reaction against the Tsarist administration with its organization in the area. By collaborating with other

¹³⁹ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 22.

¹⁴⁰ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 86.

¹⁴¹ Gregorian, 214; Rogger, 154; Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1919* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1954), 18-19; Judge, 213.

¹⁴² S.D. Beridze, V.G. Esaiashvili, eds., *Listovki Kavkazskogo soiuza RSDRP: 1903-1905 gg* (Moscow: Gos. izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1955), 123-26.

¹⁴³ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988), 11.

¹⁴⁴ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920*, 37-8; Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 44; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 131.

revolutionary parties, the Dashnaks undermined the Tsarist hold in the Caucasus. From late 1903 on, the governors in the region noted how the Armenian unrest worsened the situation in the area and asked for more funds for police from St. Petersburg, but rarely got what they wanted.¹⁴⁵ Even Golitsyn's pleas in 1904 went unanswered.¹⁴⁶

Meanwhile, the initiator of this disaster, Golitsyn (and his wife) avoided another assassination attempt by the Dashnaks in 1904 after attending a ceremony held in a church.¹⁴⁷ Soon, Golitsyn left for St. Petersburg for good. Witte believed that Golitsyn was essentially an honest and good man. Nevertheless, with his policies, Golitsyn managed to arm all elements in the Caucasus, even the Russians and the soldiers stationed in the region, against him.¹⁴⁸ Golitsyn's role in the confiscation process was an important example of how he managed to unite all Armenians against the Tsarist regime, which began to crumble in early 1905.

The Revolutionary Explosion in the South Caucasus and the Establishment of the Viceroyalty (1905–1906)

In early 1905, even the loyal proponents of the Tsarist regime saw that the system was not working. Almost all segments of the empire, both in socio-political and national terms, had problems of their own and the only response of the Russian government was to intensify its police state and declare war on Japan. Loyalty to the Tsarist monarchy, even for the new elites of industrialists and bankers, was getting weaker toward February 1905.¹⁴⁹ Meanwhile, growing economic problems were creating a suitable ground for the revolutionary movement. The failure of the regime to respond to the revolutionary movement began at the top—namely, Nicholas II. One of the measures he came up with

¹⁴⁵ Leslie Sargent, 'The "Armeno-Tatar War" in the South Caucasus, 1905–1906: Multiple Causes, Interpreted Meanings,' *Ab Imperio*, 4 (2010): 162-3.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁴⁷ 'Mestnyi otdel,' *Tiflisskii listok*, 15 October 1904 [28 October 1904].

¹⁴⁸ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 1, 95-6.

¹⁴⁹ Dominic Lieven, *Nicholas II: Emperor of All the Russias* (London: John Murray, 1993), 58-61.

as a solution was to order the Academy of Sciences to eliminate the word ‘intelligentsia’ from the Russian dictionary.¹⁵⁰

The South Caucasus was unquestionably one of the places in the empire that was feared to explode and this soon became a reality. The chaos in the aftermath of Bloody Sunday and more bad news from the Japanese front soon amalgamated with worker and student unrest in the region, which the young Mayakovski was a part of as the Marseillaise was sung in the church.¹⁵¹ This chaotic atmosphere also provided an ideal ground for all major nationalities to express their national grievances. By early 1905, the Georgian national movement had positioned itself within the wider Russian Social Democratic movement and intensified its opposition to the Tsarist administration both on national and economic grounds. It peaked in Guria, where after an uprising, a short-lived republic was proclaimed during the revolutionary turmoil in 1905.¹⁵² The other two main inhabitants of the region, Armenians and Azeris, also had grievances toward Russian rule; however, rising national tensions between the two eclipsed them and resulted in bloody inter-ethnic clashes.

There were structural reasons as to why the Armenians and Azeris directed their discontent at each other rather than the Tsarist regime. The South Caucasus had a high fertility rate and a very large population of youth as the empire moved into the twentieth century.¹⁵³ Both nationalities were steadily growing in size and this increased the international competition in various dimensions. As Kappeler explains, the main competition was among the nationalities, not the non-Russian nationalities against their Russian rulers.¹⁵⁴

The Armenian-Azeri competition was deeply felt in social and economic spheres.¹⁵⁵ The Azeris were by far the most populous group in the South Caucasus, dominating the oil-rich Baku and its environs. However, they lagged far behind the Armenians

¹⁵⁰ Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray*, 15.

¹⁵¹ Edward J. Brown, *Mayakovsky: A Poet in the Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973), 29-30.

¹⁵² Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 141-2.

¹⁵³ Pipes, ‘Demographic and Ethnographic Changes in Transcaucasia,’ 44-45.

¹⁵⁴ Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (Harlow: Longman, 2001), 292.

¹⁵⁵ An important factor was the level of general cultural development among the Armenians, especially in education. By 1905, the Armenians were better educated compared with the Azeris. Dadaian, *Armiane i Baku*, 81-2; Pipes, ‘Demographic and Ethnographic Changes in Transcaucasia,’ 47.

economically. Particularly in the cities, the Armenians dominated commerce and industry. In Baku, Armenians, with their 18.8 percent share of the city's population, owned 43.5 percent of the real estate while the Azeris had 34 percent. In firms worth more than 50,000 roubles, Armenians had 23.1 percent while the Azeris had only 4.2 percent.¹⁵⁶

The Armenian economic superiority also extended to professional jobs; as of 1905, the Armenians occupied more skilled jobs in industries and professions while the Azeris were mostly employed as unskilled labourers.¹⁵⁷ The predominantly peasant Azeris were suffering under the crumbling agricultural sector and witnessing better-performing Armenians in economic and cultural spheres. For the nascent Azeri national movement, Altstadt argues that the Armenians represented the 'surrogates' of Russian rule, a reason why the Azeris directed their anger at them when things spiralled out of control in 1905.¹⁵⁸

Following Bloody Sunday in the capital, the Armenian-Azeri clashes began in Baku in February 1905 and quickly spread to other cities. In Baku, where the general tension was already high, the clashes between the Armenians and the Azeris further undermined stability. The oil industry, already hit by incessant strikes, was seriously damaged as several oil wells were targeted by mobs.¹⁵⁹ Further, monarchists in Baku also attacked Armenians—as they disliked them for not being Orthodox Christians and for their revolutionary image—killing 60.¹⁶⁰ The Russian authorities, under severe pressure, declared martial law in Baku in February 1905.¹⁶¹

The existing Russian administration in the Caucasus was clearly unable to stop the ongoing unrest in the region. It was both discredited in the eyes of the local population and lacked the resources and dynamism to do so. For strategic and economic reasons, the Caucasus was too important to be left in turmoil and the ministers knew that more drastic

¹⁵⁶ Dadaian, *Armiane i Baku*, 51.

¹⁵⁷ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920*, 39.

¹⁵⁸ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 43.

¹⁵⁹ Henry, 185.

¹⁶⁰ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray*, 254.

¹⁶¹ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 26.

measures had to be taken before it was too late. For that reason, in late February 1905, it was decided to reinstate the viceroyalty of the Caucasus.¹⁶²

In fact, the reintroduction of the viceroyalty with wider executive powers had been proposed earlier by none other than Golitsyn, who had compiled a series of reports about it.¹⁶³ Although his project was rejected by Witte and Nicholas II, the condition of the infrastructure (especially the roads), increasing revolutionary fervour, and the economic importance of the region made the reintroduction of the post of viceroy inevitable in 1905. Additionally, the Russian bureaucratic machine was chronically understaffed. In places as unstable as the Caucasus, the Tsarist regime needed to react quickly, bypassing most of the usual procedures.¹⁶⁴ In this new scheme, the viceroy, as the chief civil and military man in the Caucasus, would be directly responsible to the Tsar in civil matters and was mostly free of central government control.¹⁶⁵

For the post of viceroy of the Caucasus, Nicholas II wanted a man whom he could fully trust and Graf Illarion I. Vorontsov-Dashkov fit the bill perfectly. A very well-known figure in the elite circles of the capital, Vorontsov-Dashkov was of highly aristocratic stock and had always been very close to the Tsar's court.¹⁶⁶ As one of the founders of the Holy Brotherhood, formed just after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 to fight the revolutionary movement, Vorontsov-Dashkov was a close associate of Alexander III.¹⁶⁷ Before coming to Tiflis as the viceroy, this warhorse's last post was the Ministry of the Imperial Court, which he had to leave after the Khodynka incident in 1896.¹⁶⁸ Despite

¹⁶² The viceroyalty of the Caucasus was founded in 1844 and was replaced with the post of High-Commissioner of the Caucasus, with less executive powers, in 1882 as part of Alexander III's policy of increased centralization. Viktor V. Cherkosov, ed., *Institut general-gubernatorstva i namestnichestva v rossiiskoi imperii*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg: Izdatelstvo Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta, 2001), 219.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 219-20.

¹⁶⁴ Another region with a viceroyalty in the Russian Empire was the Far Eastern province, which had similar administrative needs.

¹⁶⁵ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 171-2.

¹⁶⁶ Vorontsov-Dashkov was baptized by Nicholas I. Alekseev, 353-7.

¹⁶⁷ Ismail-Zade, *Graf I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: namestnik kavkazskii*, 100.

¹⁶⁸ The disaster happened during the celebrations for the coronation of Nicholas II, in which Vorontsov-Dashkov was one of the top responsible officials for organization. The platform on the festival area fell and ensuing panic caused the deaths of more than a thousand people. Lieven, *Nicholas II*, 65-66; Alekseev, 360.

this unfortunate incident, he continued to spend his summers in Tsarskoe Selo with the imperial family.¹⁶⁹

As soon as Vorontsov-Dashkov arrived in Tiflis in May 1905, he quickly formed his own cadres to pacify the region. Despite the shortage of staff, with a selection of like-minded bureaucrats, the viceroy began to address the urgent problems in the region.¹⁷⁰ For Vorontsov-Dashkov, the agrarian unrest was one of these problems. In the Caucasus, the redemption payments were still intact and the general agricultural situation was gruesome, which was helping the revolutionary movement.¹⁷¹ To fix this, he proposed the abolition of redemption fees in the region, which was accepted by St. Petersburg in principle but could not be materialized quickly. Another scheme Vorontsov-Dashkov envisioned for the pacification of the countryside was the introduction of *zemstvos*, for which a conference was organized by the viceroyalty in July 1905 for public discussion.¹⁷²

Another urgent problem was obviously the national question. The clashes between the Armenians and Azeris continued and the Georgians had their own demands. The viceroy decided to hold meetings with the representatives of these nationalities to hear them out. With the support of the viceroy, peace committees were formed by each religious group.¹⁷³ However, the viceroy soon found that reconciliation between the Armenians and Azeris was a very difficult feat. In the end, these initial conciliatory talks failed to produce an immediate result while killings and assassinations of Russian officials continued.

Under such circumstances, Vorontsov-Dashkov was aware that a key aspect of the instability in the region was the ongoing Armenian reaction to the Tsarist administration.¹⁷⁴ In his correspondence with Baron Emmanuel Iu. Nolde, his representative in St. Petersburg, the viceroy stated that two decades of ‘systematically

¹⁶⁹ Ismail-Zade, *Graf I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: namestnik kavkazskii*, 247.

¹⁷⁰ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 173-74; Villari, 131-2; Volkhonskii, 117.

¹⁷¹ N.G. Bogdanova, ‘Agrarnye otnosheniia v Azerbaidzhane v 1870-1917 gg,’ *Istoricheskie zapiski* 12 (1941): 224.

¹⁷² Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 15; Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 175; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920*, 47; Hovannisian, ‘Russian Armenia,’ 38.

¹⁷³ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 175; Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 42.

¹⁷⁴ Makharadze, 287-9.

repressive measures in relation to the Armenian Church and the Armenian population' produced nothing but discontent and played into the hands of the Armenian revolutionary movement.¹⁷⁵ In particular, the decision to confiscate the properties of the Armenian Church, an institution so important for the Armenians, pushed the Armenians away from Russia and led them to think about autonomy and support Armenian revolutionaries.¹⁷⁶

For the Russian Armenians, these measures created the impression that they were seen as the 'unfavourable element' by the Russian authorities.¹⁷⁷ The viceroy argued that a subject nation like the Armenians, which had its own history, culture, literature, newspapers, and theatres, should not be denationalized by repressive measures of Russification—itself responsible for 'the Armenian revolution in the Caucasus.' Vorontsov-Dashkov complained that unable to differentiate peaceful nationalists from revolutionary terrorists, the Russian administration alienated the Armenians in the empire.¹⁷⁸

According to the viceroy, this had to stop and the annulment of the 1903 decree would be the most urgent step in that direction.¹⁷⁹ This move would help get the Armenian Church on the side of the regime and check the support for the Armenian revolutionary movement, which would abate as soon as the decree was annulled.¹⁸⁰ In June, a delegation comprising representatives of the Armenian bourgeoisie of Tiflis visited the viceroy and their most pressing demand concerned the confiscation decree.¹⁸¹ The viceroy was positive, but he demanded from the delegation, 'as people of order,' that they needed to give him all their support to stop the terrorist activities of the Armenian revolutionary committees.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Nolde, 19 July 1905 [1 August 1905], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 2, ll. 40- 40 ob.

¹⁷⁶ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim Kraem*, 8-9; Diakin, 746-8.

¹⁷⁷ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Nolde, 19 July 1905 [1 August 1905], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 2, ll. 40- 40 ob.

¹⁷⁸ Pliaskin, 289.

¹⁷⁹ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Nolde, 19 July 1905 [1 August 1905], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 2, ll. 40- 40 ob.

¹⁸⁰ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 7; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 20.

¹⁸¹ Among these representatives were Khatisian, Samson Arutiunian, and Aleksandr A. Melik-Azariants. Chalkhushian, 61-3.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 65-69.

Finally, in August 1905, Nicholas II annulled the 1903 decree, as Vorontsov-Dashkov suggested.¹⁸³ The confiscated properties of the Armenian Church were handed back and the Armenian parochial schools were again allowed to be run by the Armenian Church. All segments of the Russian Armenian community were pleased with this decision and acts of gratitude were demonstrated in various parts of the Caucasus. Apart from the Armenian clergy, the Armenian bourgeoisie and the masses, the Dashnaks also participated in the celebrations.¹⁸⁴

Vorontsov-Dashkov's insistence on the annulment of the confiscation act and the prospects of the October Manifesto quickly pacified the conservative elements of the Armenian community in the South Caucasus. However, the Dashnaks, along with other revolutionary organizations in the region, were still at odds with the Tsarist administration. As a member of the Caucasian platform of 1905, the Dashnaksutun increased the cooperation with other socialist groups.¹⁸⁵ In addition, the party reiterated its target of political autonomy within a federative republic in the South Caucasus and Russia, and the necessity of armed struggle against Tsarism.¹⁸⁶

Until the official declaration of the annulment of the confiscation decree, the Dashnaks hunted down several Tsarist officials during the revolutionary period. After August 1905, the Dashnaks continued their assassinations of Russian officials, now because of their attitude about the Armenian-Azeri clashes, which spread to Nakhichevan, Shusha, and then Tiflis and Baku in November.¹⁸⁷ With their experience in armed struggle, the Dashnaks led the Armenian armed operations against the Azeris. The Armenian property owners, despite their dislike of the Dashnaks, had an agreement with them about the protection of their property.¹⁸⁸ According to the Dashnaks, some of the Russian bureaucrats were favouring the Azeris in this and they had to pay for it.¹⁸⁹ The message

¹⁸³ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 20-21.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.; Leon Der Megrian, 'Tiflis during the Russian Revolution of 1905,' (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1968), 133-34.

¹⁸⁵ Libaridian, 'Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaksutun,' 193-5.

¹⁸⁶ Kirakosian, 178; Ismail-Zade, *I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: administrator, reformator*, 62.

¹⁸⁷ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 40.

¹⁸⁸ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 16-7.

¹⁸⁹ Dasnabedian, 81.

of the Dashnaks to these Tsarist officials clear: ‘A gift of 25 roubles by the viceroy or the revolutionary bullet—that’s your choice.’¹⁹⁰

The Dashnaks declared that any Tsarist official who confiscated their weapons would be eliminated.¹⁹¹ The most well-known figure on the Dashnaks’ list was Prince Nakashidze, the governor of Baku, whose role in the confiscation process in 1903 was not forgotten. Apart from the memories of 1903, Nakashidze was now blamed by the Dashnaks for the Armenian losses in the clashes with the Azeris, for which he was assassinated in May 1905.¹⁹² After the assassination, a Dashnak publication stated that ‘the bomb spoke. It was the thunderous voice of the enraged Armenian people’s revenge. The monster that drained our heart’s blood is a pitiful corpse now.’¹⁹³ Among the other well-known victims of this wave of assassinations was General Maksud Alikhanov.¹⁹⁴

Toward the end of 1905, things were going downhill in the empire. The winter harvest was disastrous, the gold reserves were depleted, and exports were down.¹⁹⁵ In the Caucasus, the situation was no different. The clashes crippled the oil industry in Baku, the main economic artery of the whole region.¹⁹⁶ The revolutionaries were running rampant as strikes and expropriations were in the headlines. During the strikes in October 1905, Tiflis was described as a ‘ghost town.’¹⁹⁷ In an effort to calm the population of the Caucasus, the viceroy dismissed the rumours passed by the revolutionaries that the government intentionally incited disorder to keep its hold.¹⁹⁸

These problems of the region were not the only concerns for Vorontsov-Dashkov, who was not a young man and the difficult state of affairs in the Caucasus was further wearing him down. To make things worse, his son-in-law, Pavel P. Shuvalov, *gradonachalnik* (the city chief) of Moscow, was murdered by the revolutionaries, who later tried their

¹⁹⁰ Chalabian, *Dro*, 22-3.

¹⁹¹ Geifman, 185; Chalabian, *Dro*, 22-3; Megrian, 112.

¹⁹² Bagirova, 213; Alex Marshall, *The Caucasus under Soviet Rule* (London: Routledge, 2010), 42.

¹⁹³ Chalabian, *Dro*, 21.

¹⁹⁴ Bagirova, 214; Chalabian, *Dro*, 27-30; Dasnabedian, 81.

¹⁹⁵ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Authority Restored* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1992), 61.

¹⁹⁶ Yergin, 131.

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 190.

¹⁹⁸ Ismail-Zade, *Graf I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: namestnik kavkazskii*, 126.

luck on the viceroy and his assistant in August 1905.¹⁹⁹ In the meantime, in St. Petersburg, there was a strong dislike of the reestablishment of the viceroyalty, which reduced the authority of the ministries over such a critical region. Coupled with personal rivalries, voices of dissent about the ongoing troubles in the Caucasus began to grow toward the end of 1905.

The dissenters' main argument was that Vorontsov-Dashkov was not fit to quell the revolutionary disturbances to which his approach had been too lenient anyway. An incident in November 1905 particularly played into the hands of the critics of the viceroy. During the Armenian-Azeri clashes in Tiflis, the viceroyalty, unable to keep the order because of the shortage of available police and troops, distributed 500 rifles to the Mensheviks, who would be the mediators between the Armenians and Azeris.²⁰⁰ Although it was later abandoned due to the opposition of the conservatives and the troops stationed in Tiflis and the rifles were taken back, it gave the viceroy's opponents a huge opportunity to oust him and abolish the viceroyalty.²⁰¹ The Tsar, who had backed the viceroy since his arrival, was perplexed, as he wrote to the viceroy that 'he refused to believe this incredible news.'²⁰²

In an effort to convince Nicholas II of the abolition of the viceroyalty, Witte noted that 'the Caucasus was fully in revolution' and the solution could be to establish three general *gubernias* in the region instead of a single viceroyalty.²⁰³ Witte went on, arguing that Vorontsov-Dashkov's poor health was also failing him. Under severe pressure, the viceroy offered his resignation to the Tsar but asked him to keep the viceroyalty intact as an institution. However, Nicholas II still had faith in Vorontsov-Dashkov, a long-time friend of the royal family, and rejected his resignation. To appease the critics of the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 128; Rayfield, 315.

²⁰⁰ Garegin Pasdermadjian, *Bank Ottoman: Memoirs of Armen Garo* (Detroit: Armen Topouzian, 1990), 161-2; Lev S. Shaumian, *Kamo, zhizn i deiatelnost professionalnogo revoliutsionera S.A. Ter-Petrosiana* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1959), 35-6.

²⁰¹ Grigorii Uratadze, *Vospominaniia gruzinskogo sotsial-demokrata* (Stanford: Hoover Institution for War, Revolution, and Peace, 1968), 126-9.

²⁰² Arutiunian, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Armenii 1905-07 gg*, 184.

²⁰³ Mikhail F. Florinskii, 'Tsentralnaia vlast i kavkazskaia administratsiia v sisteme upravleniia Rossiiskoi imperiei v 1905-1914 gg,' in *Tsentr i region v istorii Rossii: Problemy ekonomicheskogo, politicheskogo i sotsiokulturnogo vzaimodeistviia*, ed. Andrei Iu. Dvornichenko (St. Petersburg: Istoricheskii fakultet SPBGU, 2010), 389-90.

viceroy in the capital, an amendment was made stipulating that all the decisions of the viceroyalty that needed to be approved by the Tsar had to pass through the Council of Ministers, of which the viceroy would technically be a member.²⁰⁴

After receiving the personal backing of the Tsar once again, Vorontsov-Dashkov knew that he had to act fast on the conflict between the Armenians and the Azeris. In February 1906, he called a meeting at the palace of the viceroy. The representatives of the Armenians and Azeris, as well as the local press, were invited to discuss what needed to be done.²⁰⁵ The meeting started with an impressive speech by the viceroy, who stressed that this conflict had to stop.²⁰⁶ Both the Armenians and Azeris were in agreement but each believed that the massacres were the other's fault. While the Azeris saw the Dashnaktsutun as the main culprit, the Armenian representatives countered by stating that the Dashnaks were only defending against the Muslim offensive. For the Armenian representatives, the blame also was placed on the Tsarist administration, which failed to act in time.²⁰⁷ From February 1906, similar meetings followed as the viceroy continued his efforts of reconciliation between the Armenians and Azeris chiefly by using the religious institutions to pacify the masses.²⁰⁸

The revolution of 1905 broke out at a time when there was serious Armenian unrest against the Tsarist administration. However, the Armenian clashes with the Azeris, particularly after the annulment of the confiscation decree, became more prevalent for the Armenians concerning their relationship with the Russian authorities. What was the net result of these bloody confrontations? To begin with, although both the Armenians and the Azeris blamed each other for the outbreak of these bloody conflicts, both sides believed that the Russian authorities, who did not act to stop the clashes, were the main

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 391-3.

²⁰⁵ Diliara B. Seyitzade, *Azerbaidzhanskie deputaty v gosudarstvennoi Dume Rossii* (Baku: Azerbaidzhanskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo, 1991), 17; Mammad S. Ordubadi, *Years of Blood: A History of the Armenian-Muslim Clashes in the Caucasus, 1905-1906* (Reading: Ithaca, 2011), 146-147.

²⁰⁶ Ismail-Zade, *Graf I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: namestnik kavkazskii*, 133; Naki Keykurun, *Azerbaijan Istiklal Mücadelesinden Hatıralar (1905-1920)* (Ankara: İlke Kitabevi, 1998), 33-4.

²⁰⁷ Bagirova, 165.

²⁰⁸ James H. Meyer, 'Turkic Worlds: Community Representation and Collective Identity in the Russian and Ottoman Empires (1870-1914),' (PhD diss., Brown University, 2007), 48-9.

perpetrators.²⁰⁹ Many Armenians, in particular the Dashnaks, believed that it was the Russians (for instance, Prince Nakashidze), who incited the Azeris against the Armenians.²¹⁰ Similarly, the Azeris blamed the Russian authorities for employing a divide-and-rule strategy during the clashes.²¹¹ Shaumian also echoed this view, articulating that the real enemy of these two peoples was no one other than the Russian state.²¹²

There might be a motive for the Russians to have a divide-and-rule policy, but there was another side to it. The Tsarist administration in the Caucasus was chronically understaffed as was the rest of the empire.²¹³ Coupled with the depletion of the troops stationed in the region because of the Russo-Japanese war, this shortage partially explains the Tsarist forces' failure to act effectively to end the clashes. Senator Aleksandr M. Kuzminskii, who was sent from the capital to investigate the incidents, argued that the events broke out due to national-religious and economic character, and it was the idleness of the authorities that let them 'grow to terrible proportions.'²¹⁴ However, Kuzminskii underlined that the rumours about Tsarist perpetration of these events were false.²¹⁵ The responsibility of the Tsarist administration was also confirmed by the viceroy, who saw

²⁰⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 21; Hovannisian, 'Russian Armenia,' 43; Dasnabedian, 81; Pasdermadjian, *Histoire de l'Arménie*, 390; Ordubadi, 57; Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 42; 67.

²¹⁰ Pasdermadjian, *Bank Ottoman*, 164-173; Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911*, 84; Dzhivelegov, 44-9; Vratzian, 'The Armenian Revolution and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Part 2),' 64-65; Khatissian, 'The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part I),' 44. Interestingly, the British diplomats in the region also depicted a similar picture regarding the culpability of the Russian administration in the Caucasus. Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne, 22 March 1905, doc. no. 60, in *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print* (hereafter, *BDFA*), Part I, Series A, Russia, 1859-1914, vol. 3, ed. Dominic Lieven (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1983), 78; Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne, 12 September 1905, doc. no. 142, in *ibid.*, 185-186; Memorandum respecting the present disturbances in Russia, 11 October 1905, doc. no. 153, in *ibid.*, 214-217.

²¹¹ Keykurun, 29; Ordubadi, 57; Hüseyin Baykara, *Azerbaycan İstiklal Mücadelesi Tarihi* (Istanbul: Azerbaycan Halk Yayınları, 1975), 131-42.

²¹² Grigorii S. Akopian, *Stepan Shaumian, zhizn i deiatelnost (1878-1918)* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1973), 49. In Soviet historiography, the Tsarist administration was portrayed as the perpetrator and the passive bystander of the events. See Borian, 307; 330; Sarkisian, *Politika osmanskogo pravitelstva*, 282.

²¹³ Jones, *Socialism in Georgian Colors*, 174. By early twentieth century, for every 1000 inhabitants in the Russian Empire, there were 4 bureaucrats whereas the figure for its Western European counterparts was 12.6 in Germany, and 7.3 in Great Britain. Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 46.

²¹⁴ Report on the implemented inspection of the city of Baku and the Baku province on the imperial order by Senator Kuzminskii to the Tsar, doc. no. 12 in Heydarov, vol. 2, 353; Sargent, 153.

²¹⁵ Ismail-Zade, *Graf I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: namestnik kavkazskii*, 118-9.

the inefficiency of the Russian military and bureaucracy in the region as an important factor in the outbreak of these bloody clashes.²¹⁶

By the end of the hostilities, the Armenian clergy and the Armenian bourgeoisie were generally content with the annulment of the confiscation decree and a visible return to normalcy—thanks to the policies of the viceroy, who saw these pillars as the natural allies of the regime. The most visible imprint of the clashes was on the Dashnaksutiun, which solidified its position as a political power. The strength and popularity of the party among the Armenians rose immensely, particularly with its organizational leadership during the Armenian-Azeri clashes.²¹⁷ In 1906, the Dashnaksutiun was no longer a vanguard party but a mass party because its membership continuously grew in relationship to its popularity. On the other hand, other Armenian parties, like the Hnchaks, were marginalized due to inter-party rifts, ideological viewpoints, and strategic choices.²¹⁸ Another result noted by the Tsarist administration concerned the more visible national animosities between the Armenians and Azeris. As Hovannisian claims, these bloody confrontations reinforced national consciousness and rivalry between both nationalities.²¹⁹ Particularly, the nascent national movement among the Azeris, parallel to the general Muslim question in the empire, would be an important factor for the viceroyalty in the coming years.

The Constitutional Period and the Tsarist Recovery (1906–1907)

By spring 1906, with strikes and peasant unrest weakened, the Tsarist government secured the biggest loan in Russian history from France.²²⁰ From then on, Pyotr A. Stolypin would arguably be the most dominating statesman in Russian political life—first

²¹⁶ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim kraem*, 10-14.

²¹⁷ The chancellery of the viceroy of the Caucasus, October 1909, RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 334, l. 103 ob; Geifman, 24; Dasnabedian, 81.

²¹⁸ Payaslian, *The History of Armenia*, 122; Panossian, 222-223; Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911*, 81-2.

²¹⁹ Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 21.

²²⁰ Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Authority Restored*, 61.

as Minister of Internal Affairs and a few months later as Prime Minister. Stolypin's task was to manage the Tsarist recovery as quickly as possible and his main strategy was to consolidate the possible allies of the Tsarist regime, with peasantry being the main target. A pragmatic man, Stolypin believed that peasants only demanded more land not significant political changes; thus, he ordered all governors to get the peasants on their side.²²¹ The Caucasus was no exception in that regard as he frequently corresponded with the viceroy, who had a similar vision about the agrarian issue.²²²

Another priority in Stolypin's recipe for recovery was the total eradication of the Russian revolutionary movement. He set an example as to how to do this with his launch of court-martials (soon to be termed 'Stolypin neckties'), which had an immediate impact. The fates of more than a thousand people charged with crimes against the state were decided in 48 hours in these courts, which usually sent them to the gallows (195 people were executed in the Caucasus alone) or to Siberia.²²³ However, Stolypin was still unhappy with the situation in the Caucasus, where he believed the revolutionary movement was still strong. Of particular concern for the premier was the influence of the Dashnaktsutun, which extended to the Armenian clergy.

The viceroy was aware of the influence of the Dashnaks, which he believed was gradually fading as the party was showing signs of wear and tear with the annulment of the 1903 decree and the end of clashes with the Azeris. For Vorontsov-Dashkov, his policy of reconciliation with the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie would undermine the popular support for the Dashnaktsutun. Moreover, the recovery of the Russian authority in the Caucasus and the return to normalcy would further drive them away, so it was only a matter of time.²²⁴ Thus, unlike Stolypin, the viceroy was proposing a gradual approach because a massive campaign against the Dashnaks would risk damaging the improving relations of the vicerealty with the Armenians.

²²¹ Ascher, *P.A. Stolypin*, 128-130.

²²² *Ibid.*, 204.

²²³ Waldron, 63-4; Alfred Levin, *The Second Duma: A Study of the Social-Democratic Party and the Russian Constitutional Experiment* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1940), 262; Jonathan W. Daly, 'Police and Revolutionaries,' in *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. 2: Imperial Russia (1689-1917), ed. Dominic Lieven (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 648; Ascher, *P.A. Stolypin*, 144.

²²⁴ *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim kraem*, 9-10.

Meanwhile, the general meeting of the Armenians at Echmiadzin in the summer of 1906 would provide Stolypin with an excellent excuse to push his preferred line of action. The meeting was organized to discuss the regulations on the church and education and to elect communal delegates. The viceroy did not want the Catholicos to go beyond these issues and discuss political matters.²²⁵ The meeting was nominally led by the Armenian clergy, as the place of the meeting indicates; however, the Dashnak delegates were also present. As the meeting proceeded, some Armenian clergymen left in protest at the radical demands made by the Dashnak members—as a result, the Dashnak dominated, winning 45 out of 53 delegates.²²⁶

According to the reports of the procurator of the Echmiadzin Synod, Frenkel, the Dashnak delegates began to act like a national assembly and voiced their demands, such as the nationalization of the church properties and the separation of the church and the state.²²⁷ Frenkel noted that the academy at Echmiadzin was a centre of propaganda and agitation and the new candidates for the new Synod were mostly questionable characters.²²⁸ For Frenkel, the Catholicos, who was under the influence of the Dashnaks, was the main reason for the outcome of the congress.²²⁹

Stolypin, who disapproved of the meeting even when the viceroy first informed him about it, became enraged when Vorontsov-Dashkov gave him the news, which confirmed Stolypin's suspicions about the Dashnaks and their influence on the Armenian Church.²³⁰ Although the meeting was shut down by order of the viceroy, the damage was done. Nicholas II was also informed about the meeting and how it was dominated by the radical elements, who according to Stolypin, seemed to manipulate the ailing Catholicos. The

²²⁵ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Stolypin, 8 August 1906 [21 August 1906], in Pozhigailo, *P.A. Stolypin: Perepiska*, 108.

²²⁶ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Stolypin, 13 September 1906 [26 September 1906], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 294, ll. 41-45; Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim kraem*, 14-15.

²²⁷ *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim kraem*, 14-15; Frenkel to N.N. Maksimov, 9 August 1906 [22 August 1906], in Diakin, 720-1; Vorontsov-Dashkov to Stolypin, 22 August 1906 [4 September 1906], in *ibid.*, 720-21.

²²⁸ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2660-75.

²²⁹ RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 294, ll. 13-14; HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2674-75.

²³⁰ Stolypin to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 15 August 1906 [28 August 1906], in Pozhigailo, *P.A. Stolypin: Perepiska*, 107-8; Vorontsov-Dashkov to Stolypin, 22 August 1906 [4 September 1906], in *ibid.*

Tsar noted that the Catholicos had to be informed about ‘the inappropriateness of his actions.’²³¹

The meeting provided an excellent way for Stolypin to point the finger at Vorontsov-Dashkov for his lack of strict measures on the revolutionary movement in the Caucasus, particularly the Dashnaks. In his defence, the viceroy noted that he did not want to intervene prematurely as this could easily foment anti-government agitation among the Armenian masses.²³² The viceroy assured Stolypin that as soon as he received the news about what was occurring in the meeting, he ordered its closure.²³³ Moreover, the Catholicos, who did not openly approve of the closure fearing that it would damage his popularity among the Armenians and even put his life in danger, was not unhappy about the decision.²³⁴ Even after the meeting, Vorontsov-Dashkov still believed that both the general situation in the region and the relations with the Armenians were stabilizing and there was no reason to take a more aggressive stand.

This was not how Stolypin viewed things from the capital as he was alarmed about the Dashnaks and their influence on the Armenian Church. In a letter to the viceroy, Stolypin underlined that some of the newly elected members of the Echmiadzin Synod had sympathies for the Dashnaktsutiun.²³⁵ The rectors of the Nersesian seminary in Tiflis and the Echmiadzin Academy were also associates of the revolutionaries who had a negative influence on the Armenian youth and used these institutions for hiding weapons and illegal literature.²³⁶ Reminded of the reports of the procurator of the Synod, Stolypin once again stressed to the viceroy that the Catholicos was under the influence of the Dashnaks.²³⁷ For Stolypin, the situation was unacceptable and a more serious line of action was needed, including the forced retirement of the Catholicos.²³⁸ In

²³¹ Stolypin to Nicholas II, 8 September 1906, in Pozhigailo, *P.A. Stolypin: Perepiska*, 109.

²³² Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim Kraem*, 14-15.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Stolypin, 13 September 1906 [26 September 1906], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 294, ll. 44 ob- 45.

²³⁵ Stolypin to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 24 December 1906 [6 January 1907], Pozhigailo, *P.A. Stolypin: Perepiska*, 120-1.

²³⁶ Ibid., 123; Arutiunian, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Armenii 1905-07 gg*, 254.

²³⁷ Stolypin to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 24 December 1906 [6 January 1907], Pozhigailo, *P.A. Stolypin: Perepiska*, 122.

²³⁸ Ibid., 124.

addition to the Dashnak influence on the Armenian Church, the premier also complained about the murders and expropriations committed by the Armenian revolutionaries, especially in Baku. He again asked the viceroy to take a more resolute stand and eliminate the Dashnak threat.²³⁹

The viceroy replied that it was true that the party had gained popularity with its leadership during the Armenian response to the Tsarist decision to confiscate the Armenian Church properties and Armenian-Azeri clashes. However, since the end of hostilities, this was changing and soon the party would lose its base and support among the Russian Armenians. Therefore the comments made by the Ministry of Internal Affairs depicting all Armenians as supporting the Dashnaktsutiun were not correct and all necessary steps were taken to forestall the Dashnaktsutiun's armed operations.²⁴⁰ In line with the observations of the viceroy, the reports from Tiflis also indicated that by the end of the revolution, the Dashnaks were showing signs of attrition.²⁴¹ Regarding Stolypin's proposal of a more aggressive approach to the Catholicos, the viceroy opposed the idea because it would create a massive disturbance among the Armenians.²⁴² Thus, by 1907, the viceroy reiterated his preference for a more balanced approach considering the recent problems the Russian administration had with its Armenian subjects.

As the disagreements between St. Petersburg and Tiflis surfaced, the Armenian deputies from the Caucasus added more drama to the situation.²⁴³ During the brief existence of the First Duma, all Armenian deputies were Kadets because the Dashnaks—like the Bolsheviks—boycotted the elections. From Erevan, Kegam M. Ter-Petrosian and Levon F. Tumanians; from Elizavetpol, Khristofor I. Bagaturov; and from Tiflis, Artemii G. Aivazov, were elected as deputies for the First Duma.²⁴⁴ Not surprisingly, these

²³⁹ 'Borba s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem na Kavkaze (Iz perepiski P.A. Stolypina s gr. I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkovym),' *KA* 34 (1929): 184-186.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 204-6.

²⁴¹ The chancellery of the viceroy of the Caucasus, October 1909, RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 334, ll. 103-104 ob.

²⁴² Pozhigailo, *P.A. Stolypin: Perepiska*, 125.

²⁴³ There was also a Catholic Armenian deputy from the province of Bessarabia, Anton K. Demianovich, who was elected to all State Dumas. Demianovich sat with various right-wing parties including the Octobrists and Nationalists.

²⁴⁴ Brief biographical descriptions of these deputies can be found in *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar Granat*, supplement to vol. 17, 7th ed. (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Granat, 1913), 1-23.

Armenians were professionals from big cities of the region. However, their impact on the First Duma was minimal.

The elections for the Second Duma produced a more radical outcome than the first one in its composition. Already popular among the Armenians, the Dashnaks improved their chances in these elections by making tactical alliances with the SRs.²⁴⁵ In the Second Duma, three of the seven Armenian deputies were Dashnaks.²⁴⁶ The Dashnak deputies in the second State Duma were Ivan Ia. Saghatelian (Aleksandropol), a former prosecutor and the rector of the Echmiadzin Seminary; a philosophy teacher in the Armenian seminary, Sirakan F. Tigranian (Erevan); and Stepan Kh. Ter-Avetikiants (Elizavetpol), a teacher and publicist.²⁴⁷ The Tsarist authorities immediately took notice of the revolutionary affiliations of the Dashnak deputies in the Duma, who decided to sit with the SRs because they had similar demands, such as the nationalization of the land, cultural autonomy, and a federative republic.²⁴⁸

The Dashnak deputies in the Second Duma, with their collaboration with the SRs, were vexing Stolypin and worsening the image of Armenians in his eyes; however, it would be an ex-Dashnak, Arshak G. Zurabian, who would infuriate Stolypin with his criticism of the huge Tsarist army and its upkeep in a parliamentary session in April 1907. Zurabian, now a Menshevik deputy from Tiflis, stated that the Tsarist army was kept only ‘for destroying and the shootings of labourers and peasants’ and would be useless against foreign armies. As expected, the right reacted strongly; Rediger, the Minister of War, and others left and chaos prevailed in the Tauride Palace, which even extended to duel offers to Zurabian. A member of the state council and the state comptroller, Piotr Kh. Schwanebach noted that this sort of behaviour ‘could be expected only from a representative of the national minorities like the Armenian Zurabov [Zurabian].’²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ ‘Georgiev’ to the head of Tiflis OO, 8 December 1906 [21 December 1906], SSSA, f. 95, o. 1, d. 8, ll. 41- 41 ob.

²⁴⁶ Apart from Demianovich, there were two Armenian Kadet deputies, Moisei S. Adzhemov (Rostov-on-Don and Nakhichevan) and Iosif N. Atabekov (Kars), and a Social Democrat, Arshak G. Zurabian (Tiflis).

²⁴⁷ *Granat*, 27; 46-8.

²⁴⁸ Gregorian, 215-16.

²⁴⁹ Levin, 297.

The Zurabian affair almost ended with the closure of the State Duma—which Nicholas II seriously thought of doing—if the insults to the Tsarist army went unpunished.²⁵⁰ Although he gave up on the idea at the moment, it would be one of the incidents that convinced Stolypin that the current State Duma, with the number of radical deputies in it, was unworkable and had to be dissolved.²⁵¹ Regarding his views on the Armenian question in the South Caucasus, the activities of the Armenian deputies in close collaboration with other revolutionary parties in the Second Duma further convinced Stolypin and other ministers that the Armenian revolutionary movement was still threatening the order in the Caucasus and urgent action was necessary.

Conclusion

‘The opponents of the state system would like to choose the path of radicalism, a path alien to Russia’s historical past, to its cultural traditions. They need great upheavals, we need a great Russia!’²⁵² Stolypin’s address in the State Duma in May 1907 set forth the essence of his politics concerning the revolutionary movement and the need to crush it. The State Duma was dissolved in June and a more systematic campaign against the revolutionary movement began. The minorities, with their national movements, would also suffer from the increased centralization and restrictive measures, starting with the reduction of ethnic minorities in the composition of the next Duma.

The Armenians were one of these minorities and in the South Caucasus. They were still seen as the most troublesome nationality by the central government. However, relations between the Tsarist regime and its Armenian subjects were far better than the disastrous situation in 1903. This improvement was not an easy feat as it took a huge effort to undo the damage of Golitsyn’s policies. Although Golitsyn was not the first top official in the Caucasus who suspected the links of the Armenian Church with revolutionary groups and

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 294-306.

²⁵¹ Shmuel Galai, ‘The Kadets in the Second Duma,’ *Revolutionary Russia* 23, no. 1 (2010): 6-7; Maria P. Bok, *Vospominaniia o moem ottse P.A.Stolypine* (New York: Izdatelstvo Imeni Chekhova, 1953), 222-23.

²⁵² Ascher, *P.A. Stolypin*, 195.

its nationalist influence on Armenian education, he was the one who stubbornly insisted on more extreme measures since his arrival in Tiflis. According to Golitsyn, the privileges of the Armenian Church and its autonomous status were the reasons why the Russian administration could not take more decisive measures. As the instability in the Caucasus grew with general strikes, student unrest, and economic stagnation in the region, Golitsyn grew even more impatient.

When Golitsyn's proposal was again on the agenda in 1903, it found several supporters in St. Petersburg, most notably Plehve. The proponents of confiscation were firmly convinced that the Armenian Church was the centre of the Armenian revolutionary movement, but the majority of the ministers, such as Witte and Lamsdorf, opposed it. Underlining the importance of the Armenian Church for the Armenians, these ministers noted that the measure would not only worsen Russia's relations with the Russian Armenians but it also would complicate her relations with the Ottoman and Persian Armenians. Despite the majority's opposition, Nicholas II approved the decree in June 1903, when the Armenian reaction to the Tsarist regime began.

This 'international theft,' as Victor Berard called it, created a persistent response from all segments of the Armenian population, even the traditionally loyal elements.²⁵³ The Armenian clergy, led by the Catholicos, protested the decision and resisted as much as they could. When the Catholicos's petitions for an audience with the Tsar were not granted, the higher Armenian clergy even considered transferring the Armenian Catholicosate to the Ottoman Empire, although this was later rejected by the Ottomans. Meanwhile, the Armenian masses showed their dissatisfaction about the decree with mass demonstrations in which they often clashed with Russian troops.

The Dashnaks, despite their critical stance toward the church, also joined the Armenian resistance in the Russian Empire, against which they did not act until the decision to confiscate. In essence, for the Dashnaks, the confiscation decree was the culmination of the Russian oppression of the Armenians to which they could not remain indifferent. During the Dashnak world congress in February 1904, the party officially declared its

²⁵³ Berard, 201-02; Judge, 120-121.

anti-Russian stance and a new programme aiming at autonomy in the South Caucasus within a federative system. Furthermore, the Dashnaks supplemented their theoretical moves with action. In close collaboration with other revolutionary parties, the Dashnak committees in the Caucasus began to hunt down Tsarist officials.

Toward the end of 1904, the empire was hit by a combination of worker and student unrest, economic troubles and bad news from the war with the Japanese. By then, the initiators of the confiscation decree were not in their posts. Plehve had been assassinated and Golitsyn had left Tiflis for St. Petersburg after failed assassination attempts on his life. Soon after Bloody Sunday in the capital, the revolutionary turmoil spread to the Caucasus, where bloody inter-ethnic conflicts between the Armenians and Azeris as well as the general grievances of the nationalities toward the Tsarist administration dominated the political scene. Apart from these, the oil industry was severely damaged which signalled to St. Petersburg that something had to be done.

The reestablishment of the Caucasian viceroyalty, with wide institutional autonomy, seemed to be the answer since this would speed up the decision-making process in a chronically understaffed periphery hit by revolutionary chaos. For the post of viceroyalty, Vorontsov-Dashkov, a personal friend of the royal family and a very experienced statesman, was the choice of the Tsar. When Vorontsov-Dashkov arrived in Tiflis in May 1905, aside from the agrarian question and the revolutionary movement in the region, the Armenian unrest was at the top of his agenda. The viceroy believed that the Armenian discontent would fade provided that the decree of confiscation was annulled thus pacifying the Armenian clergy, bourgeoisie, and, to a large extent, the Armenian masses. Upon the recommendation of the viceroy, the decree was annulled and the Armenian resistance abated but the Armenian clashes with the Azeris went on. Although the clashes ended in 1906 thanks to the reconciliation efforts of the viceroyalty and the general weakening of the revolutionary movement, both the Armenians and Azeris were bitter about their losses—for which they blamed each other and the Tsarist authorities, who remained quite passive during the clashes.

By the end of the revolutionary period, the Dashnaktsutiun emerged as the most popular and capable of all revolutionary groups in the Caucasus, a situation that troubled even top

officials in the capital, particularly Stolypin. For the premier, the influence of the Dashnaktsutiun in the region, which extended to the Armenian Church, was a bad omen and he recommended that the viceroy follow his example with his drastic measures against the Russian revolutionary movement, which was gradually weakening and going underground. Particularly after the Dashnak domination of the meeting in Echmiadzin in 1906 and the Dashnak appearance in the Second Duma together with the SR faction, Stolypin demanded stronger measures from the viceroy against the Dashnaks as one of the most pressing threats to the stability in the South Caucasus.

The viceroy, who was aware of his critics in St. Petersburg, was still resisting Stolypin's approach because he believed that extreme measures against the Dashnaks or the Armenian clergy would be untimely, as they could be interpreted by the Armenians as acts of oppression. According to the viceroy, the Dashnaks were losing their support among the Armenians since the annulment of the confiscation decree, while the Armenian clergy and the Armenian bourgeoisie were happy with the return to the old arrangement with the Russian administration. Therefore, as the Tsarist recovery continued and the region stabilized, normal policing measures would be sufficient to stamp out the Dashnaks. Although the relations between the Russian administration and its Russian subjects reached a much more manageable level from 1903 to 1907, the difference of opinion between St. Petersburg and Tiflis remained and it would continue to be an important part of the evolution of the Armenian question in the South Caucasus in the coming years.

CHAPTER 2

RUSSIA AGAINST THE DASHNAKTSUTIUN (1907–1912)

The Aftermath of June 1907 and the Stolypinshchina

Named after Ivan F. Paskevich, the commander who led the Russian conquest of Erivan in 1827, the Erivan square in Tiflis hosted various important buildings. The building of the Tiflis City Duma with its beautiful Moorish façade, the Georgian seminary where young Stalin studied, and a massive caravanserai were located around the square. More importantly, the square linked the city's world of authority based on Golovinskii Avenue and its world of commerce in Sololaki. One morning in June 1907, the residents of the square were aghast at the chaos caused by gunshots and bomb explosions. This was the Tiflis bank robbery, or Tiflis expropriation, staged by local Bolsheviks including Simon Ter-Petrossian (aka Kamo) and Stalin, on the instructions of the party leaders. When the police and gendarmerie arrived, it was too late, the perpetrators escaped with a considerable sum of money. The heist created a world-wide sensation adding to the worries of St. Petersburg regarding the situation in the Caucasus.²⁵⁴

Not long after the robbery, the most influential figure of Georgian politics, Ilia Chavchavadze was assassinated, confirming Stolypin's suspicions about the state of affairs in the South Caucasus. These two incidents continued to receive much attention, but Stolypin's biggest concern about the region was the Dashnaktsutiun. The measures taken by the viceroy based on Stolypin's instructions, could only quell smaller revolutionary parties in the region, which soon became inactive.²⁵⁵ However, with its formidable organization in the South Caucasus, the Dashnaks remained entrenched in

²⁵⁴ Montefiore, 186-88; Robert C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks: Lenin and His Critics, 1904-1914* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), 110-13.

²⁵⁵ Geifman, 111.

segments of the Armenian community because of the leadership they demonstrated in the struggle against Tsarism between 1903 and 1907. Understandably, the party still had a considerable influence on the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie by 1907 and this frustrated the premier, who was concerned about this economically and strategically important region.

By 1907, Stolypin managed to cripple the revolutionary movement in most parts of the empire with his rather stern methods. Although his harsh tactics were criticized by some, revolutionary activity experienced a huge setback in the empire and what Stolypin wanted from Vorontsov-Dashkov was a similar drive in the Caucasus, especially against the Dashnaktsutun. The viceroy, on the other hand, was not as pessimistic as Stolypin. One element upon which the viceroy relied was the conservative Armenian bourgeoisie. Emphasizing the importance of Armenian commercial classes in the region, the viceroy stated that Armenians were generally fond of capital and private property and would not support socialism. When the revolutionary movement was pacified, the Dashnaks would automatically lose its support among these classes.²⁵⁶ Similarly, the Armenian Church would loath the idea of socialization of church lands as proposed by the Dashnaks.²⁵⁷ According to the viceroy, the Armenian people, who wanted to form good relations with the Russian government, were not ‘contaminated with the autonomous aspirations’ at which the Dashnaktsutun was aiming. The Dashnak efforts for autonomy were only discrediting the party in the eyes of the people.²⁵⁸

For Vorontsov-Dashkov, the Armenian revolutionary movement was already getting weaker day by day as the Armenians now had fewer reasons to support them. Other Armenian parties like the Hnchaks had lost their organizational capabilities and the Dashnaks’ fate would be the same given enough time. The viceroy was sure that effective policing and maintaining good relations with the other political pillars of the Armenian society would resolve the problem of the Dashnaktsutun for good.²⁵⁹ Differing in their views of the urgency, both Stolypin and Vorontsov-Dashkov believed that the Dashnaks

²⁵⁶ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim Kraem*, 16-7.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 14.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 12-3.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 14-20.

needed to be stamped out as a political force for the sake of stability in the region. Meanwhile, the news from Europe regarding the Dashnak participation in the Second International added to the concerns of both.

The Dashnak Flirtation with Socialism and the Second International

Until the revolution of 1905, socialism failed to gain popularity among the Armenians. For most, the idea of emancipation of the proletariat and the transition to bourgeois capitalism did not mean much while the urgency of the emancipation of Armenians (especially Ottoman Armenians) was waiting.²⁶⁰ The Armenian parties, who adopted orthodox Marxism like the Hnchaks, also faced incessant criticism about Marxism's stance on national identity, which ultimately barred them from gaining mass popularity. Led by Stepan G. Shaumian, the Armenian SDs, as a part of the Caucasian Union of RSDWP, were in a similar position.²⁶¹ However, this began to change near 1905 as the appeal of socialism grew in the empire, but in the South Caucasus its impact became even more significant, mainly because of the transformation caused by the oil industry. In places such as Baku and Batumi, the words 'proletariat' and 'capitalist' became more

²⁶⁰ Panossian, 211; Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 71.

²⁶¹ By 1899, the Armenian SDs were organized under the Union of Armenian Social Democrats, which had branches in various parts of the Caucasus. Adopting an orthodox Marxist position, this group was quite critical of other Armenian revolutionary parties for their nationalist views. Afterwards, these Armenian SDs decided to join the Caucasian Union of RSDWP, which was founded in March 1903 and held its first congress in Tiflis same year. The executive body of the union (the Caucasus Union Committee of the RSDWP) was dominated by the Georgian SDs but it also included eminent Armenian SDs like Shaumian, B.M. Knunians and S.S. Spandarian. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 19. There was also a minor Armenian Marxist group called the Specifists. Most of the Specifists were former members of the Union of Armenian Social Democrats, who left the party because of its lack of emphasis on the national grievances of the Armenians. Supportive of the socialist movement in the Russian Empire, the group advocated cultural autonomy and federalism along national lines for which they were harshly criticized by the Caucasian Union of RSDWP. For them, instead of the national question, the focus had to be on class struggle and the destitution of the many people caused by the deeds of capitalism in places like Baku and Tiflis, which was also confirmed by various visitors to the region, like Mark Sykes. Minassian, 'Specifists,' 123; Gerard J. Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 98-99; Mark Sykes, *The Caliph's Last Heritage: A Short History of the Turkish Empire* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1915), 242. For Lenin's remark on the Specifists, see Akopian, *Stepan Shaumian zhizn i deiatelnost*, 62.

meaningful as industrial giants like the Nobels and Rothschilds were dominating the places despite organized labour's strong opposition.

The revolutionary convulsion further increased the appeal of socialism in the South Caucasus and many national parties took notice as they added socialist concepts to their agenda.²⁶² One of these parties was the Dashnaks, who thought that embracing socialism would benefit the party with its extensive links in the Russian Empire and Europe and help them not lose the Armenian workers to broader socialist parties. In April 1907, in their fourth world congress in Vienna, these ideas officially materialized. 'The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, as a revolutionary and a socialist party, puts its goal of defence of economic, political and national interests of the Armenian labouring masses with a view to replace monarchy with a people's rule and capitalism with socialization of tools and means of production.' This was the opening sentence of the new party programme.²⁶³ What the Dashnaks now envisioned was a 'federative [Transcaucasian] republic based on most extensive decentralization' and then they would introduce socialist order by means of expropriation of all tools and means of production.²⁶⁴ This democratic 'Transcaucasian Republic' would be within the larger framework of a Russian Federal Republic, but would retain its internal autonomy and have its own parliament.²⁶⁵

Despite the socialist content, the programme still retained the primacy of the national question concerning both Ottoman and Russian Armenians.²⁶⁶ Even so, this move toward socialism drove the Armenian bourgeoisie as well as militant nationalists away from the party.²⁶⁷ A small group of guerrilla fighters led by a well-known figure named Gabriel N. Keshishian, better known by his alias 'Mihran', had already raised its opposition to the party's 'Plan for the Caucasus of 1905' and incorporation of socialist themes. According to Mihranists, the party should concentrate its energies on Turkish Armenians and stay

²⁶² Figes, 70-71.

²⁶³ *Programma Armianskoi revoliutsionnoi i sotsialisticheskoi partii Dashnaktsutiun utverzhdena sezdom partii v 1907 g.* (Geneva, 1908), 17.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁶⁶ For Hovannisian, by 1907 nationalism was still dominant over socialism for the aims of the Dashnaktsutiun. Hovannisian, 'Russian Armenia,' 45; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 22. Minassian argues that the Dashnaktsutiun adopted socialism just as a formality. Ter Minassian, 'Le mouvement révolutionnaire arménien,' 559.

²⁶⁷ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 23-24.

away from Russian affairs.²⁶⁸ Mihran stated that he was in the party ranks not for socialism but ‘simply for the reason that he promised to avenge on the Turks, who killed his sisters and brothers.’²⁶⁹ In the end, his line was not adopted and Mihran and his followers left the party for which Mihran was condemned to death by the Dashnaksutun.²⁷⁰ However, it was not easy to hunt down an experienced guerrilla leader like Mihran, who would ultimately help doom the fortunes of the Dashnaksutun in the Russian Empire.

Another famous Armenian guerrilla chief, Andranik believed that the new programme was incorrectly bold in its aims regarding the Caucasus, which could further increase Tsarist hostility, and thus weaken the party.²⁷¹ He went on by voicing his concerns over the compatibility of socialist values and concepts with nationalist rhetoric and the potential dangers of this type of propaganda.²⁷² Respected as a man of action, Andranik and his clique were in a minority in this situation and the adoption of socialist concepts into the party programme went forward.

The loss of support within the party ranks was thought to be compensated by increased cooperation with other socialist parties in Russia, which was encouraged in the congress in Vienna. During the revolutionary years, Dashnaksutun had allied itself with various social political parties for tactical purposes. In the post-revolutionary period, the measures taken by the Stolypin administration made the collaboration with socialist parties especially the SRs even more desirable. For the third Duma elections, the SR party boycotted the elections. However, tactical alliances with the Dashnaks were kept, especially with the support of a prominent SR member, V.V. Lunkevich, who wrote

²⁶⁸ Dasnabedian, 85-7; Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 45.

²⁶⁹ Khikar A. Barsegian, *Istoriia rasprostraneniia marksizma-leninizma v Armenii: 1907-1920 gg.*, vol. 2 (Erevan: Aiastan, 1981), 294.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.; Dasnabedian, 91; Kapriel S. Papazian, *Patriotism Perverted: A Discussion of the Deeds and the Misdeeds of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the So-Called Dashnagtzoutune* (Boston: Baikar press, 1934), 28-29.

²⁷¹ Antranik Çelebyan, *Antranik Paşa* (Istanbul: Peri, 2003), 127; Papazian, 29-30.

²⁷² Çelebyan, 128-9.

several articles for the Dashnak journal, *Droshak* depicting the woes of the Tsarist Armenians during these years.²⁷³

The only Dashnak deputy in the third State Duma was Hovhannes Saghatelian. A lawyer by training, he worked in the Echmiadzin Seminary and later in the Legal Advisory council to the Oil Producers' Union in Baku.²⁷⁴ In the absence of the SRs, Saghatelian sat with the Trudoviki faction in the Duma.²⁷⁵ In the South Caucasus, room to make an impact was getting smaller for the Dashnaks and the Duma was indeed becoming an 'idle talking shop' as Goryemkin described it.²⁷⁶ Stolypin, under his program of recovery, cracked down on all socialist parties and most of their members fled to Europe, where they could work more freely. In the face of increased police pressure, the Dashnaks decided to collaborate with these socialist groups based in Europe.

In fact, the party was already familiar with the European intelligentsia. Particularly sympathetic to the Armenian cause, eminent French socialists and liberals such as George Clemenceau, Jean Jaures, Anatole France and Pierre Quillard were collaborating with the Dashnaks in publishing the Dashnak-funded *Pro-Armenia* journal in Paris.²⁷⁷ The Western Bureau of the Dashnaktsutun was located in Geneva and it was in constant touch with the Eastern Bureau of the party in Tiflis as they were organizing their congresses in Europe.

The key step came in August 1907 when the Dashnaks were invited to participate in the congress of the Second International in Stuttgart with the support of SRs. Some parties, like the Bolsheviks, protested on the grounds of the nationalist origins of the party.²⁷⁸ Another sceptic emphasized that the party's first aim was still the 'emancipation of Turkish Armenia' not the emancipation of the working classes and blamed the Dashnaks

²⁷³ Ibid., 215.

²⁷⁴ 3-ii sozyv Gosudarstvennoi Dumi, portrety, biografii, avtografy (St. Petersburg: Izdanie N.N. Olshanskogo, 1910), 49.

²⁷⁵ Milan M. Boiovich, ed., *Nashi deputaty. Chleny Gosudarstvennoi Dumi (portrety i biografii): tretii sozyv 1907-1912 gg.* (Moscow: Tipografiia t-vo I.D. Sytina, 1913), 418.

²⁷⁶ Kerensky, 94.

²⁷⁷ Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 14; Dasnabedian, 61.

²⁷⁸ Hovannisian, 'Russian Armenia,' 45.

for trying to 'benefit from the socialist movement without being true socialists.'²⁷⁹ Despite these criticisms, the Dashnaks took part in the congress in Stuttgart by sending three delegates from the Russian Empire.²⁸⁰

More importantly, the Dashnaks were again in a hide-and-seek game with the Tsarist secret police in the cities where they were based, chiefly Paris and Geneva. Perhaps an indicator of the Tsarist approach to fighting the revolutionary movement was an Okhrana bureau headquartered in Paris for hunting down the revolutionaries among the Russian émigrés whose numbers in France rose to 35,000 by 1911.²⁸¹ This bureau was called the Foreign Agency (*Zagranichania Agentura*) and was founded in 1883. Ironically, the initial steps to set up a secret police branch in Europe for collective security against the revolutionary movement were taken by Loris-Melikov, who was of Armenian descent.²⁸² Later, Plehve, the founder of the first systematic Russian secret police at home, ensured the establishment of the bureau in Paris.

Having both Tsarist secret agents and local detectives on their staff, this branch was constantly observing the movements of the revolutionaries, especially in France, Switzerland, and Germany. Informers were abundant, infiltrating the circles of radicals and creating similar scenes described in Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*. Dashnaks, recently a thorn on the side of the Tsarist regime in the South Caucasus, were now joining the Socialist International and became part of the bigger game. The Foreign Agency took notice and soon the traffic of intelligence reports from Paris to St. Petersburg and Tiflis about subversive activities of the Dashnaks grew.

Dashnaks joined the Second International in 1907 as they sought to benefit from the general power of the socialist movement both theoretically and pragmatically. The troublemaker image of the Dashnaks as the most powerful Armenian political party was further entrenched upon their arrival in the European arena thanks to the reports provided by the Tsarist secret police in Paris. On top of the complications they caused on the

²⁷⁹ Mara, 'Socialism by the Sword,' *Social Democrat* 6, no. 12, transcr. Ted Crawford (December 1907): 727-731.

²⁸⁰ Oganessian, 162.

²⁸¹ Zuckermann, *The Tsarist Secret Police Abroad* (New York: Macmillan, 2003), 48-9.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 57-8.

national level, the Dashnaks were now a part of a broader international socialist network. In addition, their involvement in the constitutional revolutions in the neighbouring empires was adding more fuel to the fire.

Armenian Revolutionaries in the Making of Revolutions in the Neighbouring Empires (1907–1908)

As Russia was recovering from revolutionary insurrection, two neighbouring empires were experiencing constitutional movements in which the Armenian revolutionaries were instrumental. The first of these was the revolutionary movement in Persia, which resulted in the proclamation of the Persian Constitution and the inauguration of the parliament in 1906. This Tabriz-based constitutional movement upset not only the Shah but also the Russians and the British who had interests in the Persian Empire. In order to prevent further complications, the Russians concluded an agreement with the British in 1907 that put northern Persia under the Russian sphere of influence and southern Persia under the British.

In northern Persia, Russia had political and commercial interests, for which political stability was essential. More importantly, this region, with its considerable Azeri and Armenian populations, had close links with the South Caucasus. Disorder in northern Persia could easily threaten order across the border. This was increasingly the case in Persia after the conclusion of the Russian-British agreement of 1907, which intensified the conflict between the constitutionalists and the Shah's forces. Among the supporters of the constitutionalist groups were the Dashnaks, who called Russia and Britain 'thieves' for the 1907 agreement.²⁸³ The Dashnaks were becoming more of a factor in the revolution throughout 1908 and their anti-Russian attitude was growing. For the Dashnaks, the Persian constitutional movement was 'not just a movement for

²⁸³ Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911*, 74.

constitutionalism but also one for independence from Russian oppression and exploitation and from “Russia’s blind or seeing tool,” the Shah.’²⁸⁴ In the publications of the party, Russia was portrayed as having expansionist aims regarding northern Persia.²⁸⁵

While the Russian-led Persian Cossacks were busy bombarding the parliament building, *Droshak* was criticizing Tsarism as ‘it interfered moreover in Persia’s bloody sorrow, with its usual cynical barbarity and extinguished the emancipatory blaze.’²⁸⁶ Despite all the efforts, with Russian help, the Persian Parliament was shut down in the summer of 1908. During the Civil War that followed, the Dashnaks, along with other Caucasian revolutionary groups, including the Hnchaks, intensified their support for the opposition forces against the Russian-backed Shah.²⁸⁷

The Dashnak participation in the Persian constitutional movement was noted not only by Russian diplomats. Baron Nolde, in his speech in the State Duma in 1907, argued that ‘these revolutionaries [the Dashnaks], who were fighting in three fronts needed to be stamped out from the Russian Empire.’²⁸⁸ Vladimir M. Purishkevich stressed the difficulties the Dashnaks caused for the Russian imperial interests with their role in the Persian constitutional revolution.²⁸⁹ Thus, by the end of 1908, the Dashnaks’ participation in the Persian revolution reflected their antagonism against the Tsarist interests in northern Persia and their capabilities as a revolutionary organization, which was a serious security concern for the South Caucasus. As this further deteriorated their image in the eyes of the Russian authorities, the party was also active in another struggle against a strong autocrat in the Ottoman Empire.

In the late 1890s and early 1900s, partly owing to the mutual understanding of two autocrats, Abdulhamid II and Nicholas II, and partly to political repression by the

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Houri Berberian, ‘The Dashnaktsutun and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1905-1911,’ *Iranian Studies* 29, no. 1/2 (Winter - Spring 1996): 15-6.

²⁸⁶ Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911*, 75.

²⁸⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982), 96-7; 105; Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914: A Study in Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1968), 527; Cosroe Chaqueri, *Russo-Caucasian Origins of the Iranian Left. Origins of Social Democracy in Modern Iran* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), 160-3.

²⁸⁸ Mikael Varandian, *L’Arménie et la question arménienne* (Laval: Impr. Moderne, G. Kavanagh et cie., 1917), 69-70; Pasdermadjian, *Histoire de l’Arménie*, 379.

²⁸⁹ Ismail-Zade, *Vorontsov-Dashkov: administrator, reformator*, 115.

Hamidian regime, the Dashnak efficiency in the Ottoman Empire was greatly reduced. This was also the case for other oppositional groups in the Ottoman Empire. These groups were often called Young Turks as a reference to other national movements in Europe; among them were many members of different nationalities of the empire. There was some cooperation between these various groups and the Armenian revolutionaries prior to that date. For instance, the Dashnaks and the Hnchaks joined the congresses of the Ottoman oppositional groups in Paris in 1905 and 1907.²⁹⁰

This began to change in 1905 when the opposition groups began to expand. In the same year, the Dashnaks masterminded an assassination attempt on Abdulhamid II with the help of a Belgian anarchist. Although the bomb failed to kill the Sultan, it demonstrated Dashnak capabilities. Later as the general opposition movement took root, the Dashnaks sided with the CUP, which later became the dominant political party in Ottoman politics. The Sultan had relented to the revolutionary outburst in the summer of 1908 and accepted the constitution and the reopening of the Ottoman Parliament. From then on, the Dashnaks were in league with the CUP. As stated by Mikael Varandian, for the Dashnaks, this was a ‘defensive alliance’ to protect the constitutional regime in the Ottoman Empire.²⁹¹ For the CUP, the alliance with the Dashnaks was the key to holding the Armenian loyalties to the empire. In addition, the CUP believed that the Dashnaks needed them in the face of the Tsarist persecution.²⁹²

Although the priorities of these two were not identical, the Dashnaks believed that the new government could meet their demands concerning agrarian relations in Eastern Anatolia by addressing land reforms, tax arrangements and the issue of Kurdish nomads.²⁹³ As the allies of the CUP, the Dashnaks were promising the Ottoman Armenians more individual liberties and the guarantee of civic equality under the

²⁹⁰ Şükrü M. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 95; 191.

²⁹¹ ‘Rapport présenté au congrès socialiste international de Copenhague par le Parti Arménien “Daschnakzoutioun”, Turquie-Caucase-Perse (1910),’ in *Histoire de la II^e Internationale, Congrès Socialiste International, Copenhague 28 Aout-3 Septembre 1910*, vol. 21 (Geneva: Minkoff Reprint, 1981), 25.

²⁹² Hanioglu, 193.

²⁹³ Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2006), 235-9; Kaligian, 44-68.

constitution. With these expectations, nearly 50,000 Tsarist Armenians moved back to Eastern Anatolia after July 1908.²⁹⁴

With their role in yet another revolutionary movement against an autocrat, the Dashnaktsutun's capabilities made it a more imminent threat for the recovering Tsarist regime. In August 1908, the Tsarist police were speculating that the party, with its substantial fighting force, could organize assassination of Shah and the Sultan and perhaps an important terrorist act against Russia and could even proclaim 'independent Armenia' by using the confusion.²⁹⁵ On the other hand, given the anti-Tsarist position of the Dashnaks, their rising political influence on Ottoman Armenian politics was distressing for the Tsarist authorities. The promises of liberties for the Ottoman Armenians given by the Dashnaks after the revolution of 1908, if fulfilled, could have undesirable repercussions on the political demands of the Russian Armenians.²⁹⁶ Therefore, by the end of 1908, the Dashnak involvement in the constitutional movements in the Persian and Ottoman empires continued to vex the Tsarist authorities as they called the Dashnaks '*spiritus rectorum* (the guiding spirit) of all constitutional movements' between 1907 and 1908.²⁹⁷ However, both countries were enormously important for Russia and the Dashnaks could not be allowed to complicate Russia's interests. The Dashnak activity in neighbouring empires was also a sign of potential problems for ongoing Tsarist stability in the South Caucasus. In the end, all of this added up to a negative image in the eyes of the Russian officials, most of whom believed that the pressure on the party had to be intensified.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Pasdermajian, 183; Kaligian, 68.

²⁹⁵ 'Borba s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem na Kavkaze (Iz perepiski P.A. Stolypina s gr. I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkovym),' *KA* 35 (1929): 150.

²⁹⁶ British diplomats pointed out that the constitutional regime and the liberties in the Ottoman Empire could complicate Russia's relations with the Russian Armenians as well as the Caucasian Muslims. Salahi Sonyel, *The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia: Turks and Armenians in the Maelstrom of Major Powers* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2000), 36-7.

²⁹⁷ 'Rapport présenté au congrès socialiste international,' 5.

²⁹⁸ 'Borba s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem,' *KA* 34 (1929): 186; Dasnabedian, 93.

The Tsarist Urgency

By 1908, both St. Petersburg and Tiflis knew that they had to eliminate the Dashnak powerbase in the region for a stable Caucasus and better relations with Russian Armenians. The other political pillars, the Armenian Church and the urban elements, were mostly eager to ally with the regime if the power of the Dashnaks was broken. However, there were differences as to how to handle this. As in the case of the Armenian Church, there was a difference of opinion between St. Petersburg and Tiflis regarding the level of threat posed by the Dashnaks and the way to eliminate it. Acknowledging the importance of security precautions, the viceroy was again pressing for a more gradual approach that would alienate the Dashnaks from the other elements of the Armenian community in the region.

However, the level of urgency to sort out the problem of Dashnaktsutun was much higher in St. Petersburg. The premier believed that a more proactive method was necessary and blamed the viceroy for being too lenient with the Dashnaks. In a report to the viceroy, Stolypin argued that the Caucasus was not as peaceful as Vorontsov-Dashkov described in his report to the Tsar. Terrorist activity, brigandage, and other forms of crime were rampant in the region for which he blamed the Caucasus administration.²⁹⁹ The Dashnaks were the centre of the premier's attention in this failure. According to Stolypin, the war against the Dashnaks achieved too little and the party was still strong enough to terrorize Armenians by methods such as extorting money from Tiflis merchants or forming a shadowy police organization in Elizavetpol.³⁰⁰ Stolypin believed that the vicerealty, with its wide administrative powers, should have been more active regarding the Dashnaks, as the central government was with the Russian revolutionary movement.³⁰¹ The government was now facing a threatening criminal

²⁹⁹ 'Borba s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem,' *KA* 34 (1929): 187-191.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 192-4.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 200-2.

organization that was growing strong in the eyes of the local administration, 'which remained indifferent to this dangerous phenomenon for several years.'³⁰²

The viceroy still insisted on his methods and did not share the views of Stolypin about the level of danger the Dashnaks posed in 1907 or his administration's passivity to stop them. Acknowledging that the Dashnaktsutun was 'more dangerous than other organizations in the region,' he stressed his previous line as to how to approach the problem. In a normal state of relations between the Armenians and the Russian government, unlike the period between 1903 and 1907, the Dashnaks would eventually lose their power as other elements ceased to support them.³⁰³ For the viceroy, this was increasingly the case as the support of the Armenian masses for the Dashnaks was falling since the party's services of protection were not needed anymore with the end of the hostilities with the Azeris. More importantly, the party's financial demands and its coercive methods were damaging its popularity.³⁰⁴ Moreover, the Ottoman Armenian immigrants in the South Caucasus, a key Dashnak resource for manpower, were expelled by Russian Armenians.³⁰⁵ By July 1908, both in Tiflis province and in the Caucasus in general, the viceroy noted that 'the aspirations of the Armenian population for liberating itself from the guardianship of the Dashnaktsutun' were observed.³⁰⁶

Considering 'the cultural state and the level of development of the sense of justice of the local population as well as the geographical conditions and the lack of proper communication network in the region,' Vorontsov-Dashkov was pleased with his performance against the revolutionary movement.³⁰⁷ What the viceroy saw as missing was the lack of funds for effective policing for which the Caucasus did not get anything while inner regions were given 20 million roubles between 1905 and 1906.³⁰⁸ Soon, other reports siding with Stolypin's perspective began to flow to St. Petersburg.³⁰⁹ A report by the Department of Police claimed that the Dashnaks, far from losing power, controlled

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid., 203-10; Kuleshov, 103.

³⁰⁴ 'Borba s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem,' KA 34 (1929): 209-10.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 214.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 202-3.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 215-6.

³⁰⁹ 'Borba s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem,' KA 35 (1929): 141.

the Caucasian press, possessed a formidable army of guerrillas, a budget that could reach up to 10 million roubles, and an active membership base of 165,000.³¹⁰ The report went on saying that owing to its power, the party could still attract donations from wealthy Armenians, and something should be done about this.³¹¹ In addition to the Sultan and the Shah, the party could also target Stolypin and Nicholas II for assassination.³¹²

In the Tauride Palace, the Dashnaktsutiun's strong presence in the South Caucasus provided the rightists ammunition to rant about how Vorontsov-Dashkov's liberal policies failed. In an exaggerated fashion, Purishkevich was claiming that as the leading separatist organization in the Caucasus, the Dashnak organization expanded all over the Caucasus and the main body of the party (the Eastern Bureau in Tiflis) 'gave directives and practically ruled the Caucasus.'³¹³ Purishkevich's speech about Vorontsov-Dashkov was so scathing that one of the daughters of the viceroy, furious at the slanderous accusations of the eccentric deputy, wrote that 'such a bastard should be strangled.'³¹⁴

All these reports highlighted that the main reason for all this was the lenient approach of the viceroyalty.³¹⁵ Hardliners gained more supporters among the Tsarist officials; however, the viceroy, with his extensive administrative powers in the region, was still resisting. Meanwhile, the confessions of the former Dashnak guerrilla leader Mihran proved to be what St. Petersburg was waiting for to crush the Dashnaktsutiun. Soon, with the approval of Stolypin and the Minister of Justice, Shcheglovitov, a grand undertaking was underway to end the Dashnak threat in the Russian Empire once and for all.³¹⁶

³¹⁰ Ibid., 149; Gaibov, 19-26. This was the figure presented by the party to the Socialist International, which Ter Minassian considers inflated. Ter Minassian, 'Le mouvement révolutionnaire arménien,' 545.

³¹¹ 'Borba s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem,' KA 35 (1929): 149; Gaibov, 19-26.

³¹² Gaibov, 26.

³¹³ Ismail-Zade, *Vorontsov-Dashkov: administrator, reformator*, 114-7.

³¹⁴ Ismail-Zade, *Graf I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: namestnik kavkazskii*, 191-192. The viceroy himself complained to the Tsar about his critics in the State Duma. Reiterating his faith in the Tsar, without which he would not stay in the Caucasus for a second longer, the viceroy noted that the situation in the Caucasus was though but being constantly undermined by the central government was worse. 'Pisma I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkova Nikolaiu Romanovu (1905-1915 gg.),' KA 26 (1928): 112.

³¹⁵ 'Borba s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem,' KA 35 (1929): 149.

³¹⁶ In his interrogation by the Provisional government in 1917, Shcheglovitov was asked why the Dashnaks, among other Russian revolutionary parties, were put in a grandiose trial. Shcheglovitov answered that it was the mass [Armenian] participation to the party at a serious level. The interrogation of I.G. Shcheglovitov, 26 April 1917 [9 May 1917], in *Padenie tsarskogo rezhima: stenograficheskie otchety*

The First Phase of the Trial of the Dashnaktsutun (1908–1910)

In June 1907, Mihran was sitting with three other Dashnak dissidents in a hotel in the village of Armavir. A killing squad sent by the Dashnaktsutun rushed in and attacked, instantly killing one of Mihran's associates, Vartapetians. Mihran and Mukhtarov were seriously wounded while Giulmazinian managed to run away. Soon, Mukhtarov also died of his wounds. This was not the first time the party made attempts on Mihran's life. In May, he had survived an attack by two men in the streets of Tiflis, which forced him to hide in Armavir. After the last failed attempt in Armavir, the Dashnak committees grew more relentless as they kept on hunting down not only Mihran but his supporters and family as well. Fearing for his life and admitting to the police that he was a member of the Dashnaktsutun until the split, Mihran accepted being an informer for the police and began to tell the secrets of the Dashnaks.³¹⁷ Mihran's revelations throughout 1908 gave the police and the judiciary more insight about the machinations and organization of the party.³¹⁸ This was the opportunity St. Petersburg was waiting for to take them down.

Based on Mihran's confessions, a series of raids and mass arrests were initiated in 1908. These were the first steps of the grand political trial of the Dashnaktsutun. Soon, on the orders of Shcheglovitov, the 'initiator and encourager of the Dashnaktsutun trial,' the chief prosecutor of Novocherkassk judiciary chamber, Nikolai I. Lyzhin was appointed to carry out the preliminary investigation.³¹⁹ On top of his responsibilities as the Chief Prosecutor of Novocherkassk, Lyzhin now assumed extraordinary responsibilities for the trial as the investigator for especially important cases. Shcheglovitov's choice was quite controversial since Lyzhin was under close scrutiny after the recent rumours of misconduct about his involvement in the Novorossiysk republic trial.³²⁰ Despite the

doprosov i pokazanii, dannykh v 1917 g. v chrezvychainoi sledstvennoi komissii vremennogo pravitelstva, vol. 2, ed. Pavel E. Shchegolev (Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1925), 421.

³¹⁷ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 1, 7-8.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 311.

³¹⁹ RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 334, ll. 104 ob, 105; Boris S. Utevsii, *Vospominaniia iurista* (Moscow: Iuridicheskaiia literatura, 1989), 45.

³²⁰ In December 1905, the revolutionary elements led by the Novorossiysk soviet took over government functions in the city and proclaimed the Novorossiysk republic. A few weeks later, Tsarist forces entered

reports pointing out signs of improper conduct on the evidence, he was cleared of the charges and he was now awarded with a bigger political trial.³²¹

As Lyzhin began to work, pressure on the party was growing. The number of arrests rose beginning in late 1908. In less than a year, more than a thousand Armenians who were suspected of being party members were apprehended. The most imminent target of Lyzhin was the Dashnak committees responsible for the Russian Empire, starting with the Tiflis-based Eastern Bureau of the Dashnaktsutjun. Most of the leading members of the Eastern Bureau were arrested and put into prison. Among them were Avetis Aharonian [aka Garib], the rector of the Nersesian Seminary in Tiflis, who was also suspected of being a member of the party's executive terrorist council. In his interrogation, Aharonian denied being a member of the party and a member of the executive terrorist council. As a man of letters, Aharonian stated that he was opposed to terrorism; otherwise he would not have been appointed as the rector of the Nersesian seminary or as the delegate of the Catholicos to the Hague conference of 1907. Aharonian's defence did not impress Lyzhin and he was put into prison in May 1909.³²²

Soon, other members of the Eastern Bureau such as Dr. Amazasp Ohanjanian, who was reported to manage the party's propaganda affairs, Stepan Zorian (aka Rosdom), one of the original founders of the party, and Arutjun Sharikian, also a member of the party's executive terrorist council of the party met the same fate.³²³ Following the Eastern Bureau, other lesser Dashnak committees under its hierarchy were targeted and soon the party organization of the Dashnaktsutjun in the South Caucasus was debilitated. Some prominent Dashnaks like Pastermadjian were luckier as they left the Caucasus before the storm hit. One of the organizers of the Armenian units in the clashes against the Azeris in 1905–1906, Pastermadjian left for the Ottoman Empire in November 1908 and avoided imprisonment.³²⁴

the city and various affiliates of the movement were arrested and put into trial. For details about the allegations regarding Lyzhin's misconduct in this trial, see Shchegolev, 414-19.

³²¹ Promulgation of the resolutions of the Fifth World Congress of the Dashnaktsutjun (Translation from *Droshak*), September 1909, SSSA, f. 153, o. 1, d. 3281, ll. 47-47 ob; Shchegolev, 419-20.

³²² HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 2, 560-2.

³²³ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 1, 319-20; Dasnabedian, 94.

³²⁴ Pastermadjian, *Bank Ottoman*, 10-1.

The Armenian intelligentsia was also included in the investigation process. Perhaps the most famous of them, Hovhannes Tumanian, the Armenian national poet, was accused of being a member of the Dashnaktsutun, tried and arrested in Tiflis, and put into Metekhi prison.³²⁵ Suspected of being an organizer of the terrorist branch of the party, a participant in the murder of a Tiflis Okhrana detective in December 1908, and the murder of a tobacco factory owner, Aram Safarov, Tumanian was released only a few months later with a bail of 5,000 roubles.³²⁶ Another well-known Armenian poet, Avetik Ishakian, was also arrested as he was suspected of being a member of the Tiflis committee of the party and the leading acquirer of arms. Soon, he also headed to Metekhi prison.³²⁷ Suspected of sympathizing with the party, Armenian publishing houses, particularly Hermes, owned by S.P. Edigarov, and Arach in Tiflis, were also targeted for publishing illegal literature.³²⁸

Apart from these usual suspects, many Armenians from various backgrounds were also included in the trial, which brought another dimension to it. The Russian Armenian community was shaken by the arrests of well-known members of the Armenian bourgeoisie and the Armenian clergy. A curious example was Aleksandr A. Melik-Azariants, whose family owned the trading centre—a fine building at the end of the city's main street, Golovinskii Avenue. In April 1909, the same merchant Melik-Azariants was under arrest for taking part in Dashnak financial transactions. In his defence, he accepted neither belonging to the party nor supporting it financially.³²⁹ He claimed that the transactions with Archimandrite Koriun were for protecting the Armenians against the Azeris during the Armeno-Azeri clashes in 1905–1906.³³⁰ As a wealthy merchant, Melik-Azariants told the police that the Dashnaks were his 'enemy' and he financed the liberal *Mshak* journal to oppose Dashnak influence among the Tsarist Armenians.³³¹ The arrest

³²⁵ Aknouni, 17.

³²⁶ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 2, 434-435; The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to the Department of Police Osobyi Otdel (DP OO), 16 March 1909 [29 March 1909], GARF, f. 102, Osobyi otdel (OO) (1909), o. 239, d. 14 (obsch.), ll. 66-7.

³²⁷ Reference of the Tiflis Okhrana, 13 December 1908 [26 December 1908], SSSA, f. 95, o. 1, d. 30, l. 113; Sarkisyanz, 171-2.

³²⁸ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 5, 980-85; HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2637-39.

³²⁹ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 2, 561-62.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

of Melik-Azariants, along with several other urban elements, created a shock wave among the Armenians of the South Caucasus. The mayor, Alexander Khatisian, suspected that Lyzhin was looking for an excuse to arrest him as well.³³²

Archimandrite Koriun, who was involved in the accusations against Melik-Azariants, was also considered by the Tiflis Okhrana to be a member of the Elizavetpol Central Committee of the party. He was accused of organizing the assassinations of a score of Tsarist officials as well as purchasing arms for the party. Although he was acquitted in the first instance, he was tried again and was put into prison.³³³ Besides Koriun, other Armenian clergymen who were suspected of being Dashnak members or sympathizers were also arrested. Particularly concerned about this news was the newly elected Catholicos, Izmirlian. The intelligence reports pointed out that Izmirlian was planning to ask the Tsar for amnesty for some of the arrested Dashnaks and also Hnchaks in his visit to the capital in May 1909.³³⁴ The Catholicos indeed told Nicholas II about the arrested Armenian revolutionaries and although Nicholas II promised that he would review their situation, little changed.³³⁵

The Repercussions of the Initial Phase of the Dashnak Trial

As arrests and interrogations continued, the current Dashnak organization in the Caucasus was being exposed more for their past deeds.³³⁶ According to the former procurator at the Echmiadzin synod between 1903 and 1908, Leonid A. Frenkel, the Dashnaks murdered or maimed nearly 250 government officials and Armenians between 1904 and 1908.³³⁷

³³² Alexander Khatissian, 'The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part II),' *The Armenian Review* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1949): 105.

³³³ Ostrovskii, 521-2.

³³⁴ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Odessa to the Director of the Department of Police N.P. Zuev, 4 May 1909 [17 May 1909], GARF, f. 102, OO (1909), o. 239, d.14 (obshch.), ll.163- 163ob.

³³⁵ Aknouni, 50.

³³⁶ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 1, 235-60.

³³⁷ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2658-60.

Frenkel claimed that he was also condemned to death by the party, whose assassins tried, and failed, to kill him three times. As a close observer of the relationship between the Dashnaks and the Armenian Church, the former procurator also pointed out that having realized that the Armenian masses were very fond of their religion and clergy, the Dashnaks lost their hopes of luring them to socialism. What the Dashnaks were now trying to do was to stir up the masses against the Armenian religious and public institutions and to link their [the Dashnaks'] failure to incite rebellion among the Ottoman Armenians to 'the treacherous policy of Russia.'³³⁸

As such reports kept coming; St. Petersburg and Lyzhin-led investigation team became even more assured of the extent of the Dashnak threat in the region. Based on the findings of the preliminary investigation, the evaluations by Lyzhin in the first stages of the trial were highly unfavourable. According to Lyzhin, the Dashnaks set up their own courts, had similar aims to the SRs, and their main objectives in the Russian Empire were to overthrow the Russian state structure and change the fundamental laws with a view of establishing a democratic Russian republic. For these objectives, the Central Committee in Tiflis and others collected a huge amount of money for arms and explosives, which was necessary for creating terror directed against, first, the representatives of the government, and, second, individuals.³³⁹

Similar reports produced by Okhrana were circulated within the Tsarist institutions related to the trial. In one of these reports, the activities of the Dashnaks were seen mainly as self-defence until 1905, when the party adopted 'the Plan for the Caucasus' that defined its strategy in Russia. At that point, the party moved from self-defence to direct struggle with the Russian government in collaboration with Russian revolutionary parties. From then on, one of the slogans of the party for Russia was 'Down with the autocracy.'³⁴⁰ Another report written in 1909 considered the resolutions taken in the Vienna congress in 1907 a watershed. It was in this congress that the party took an 'exclusively revolutionary direction' for the accomplishment of its final aim:

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 1, 108.

³⁴⁰ A Short Note on the History and the Current Situation of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Dashnaksutiun, SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 880, 98 ob.

overthrowing the existing government structure and the establishment of the Armenian democratic republic within the federative Russian Republic.³⁴¹ With its well-established organization in the Caucasus, the Dashnaktsutun, in the eyes of a Tsarist official, was ‘a sort of state within the state.’³⁴²

There were also some complications the trial process brought about. The sheer number of the arrested Armenians as well as their diverse profile created the impression that the trial was not only against the Dashnaktsutun but against the Armenians. This was understandable given the recent problems the Russian Armenians had with the Russian government. Growing anxiety among the Russian Armenians troubled the viceroy, who was bitter about the way the trial was launched directly on orders from the capital. For Vorontsov-Dashkov, it was initiated without his consent as he claimed that the trial went on despite his arguments and ‘without enough foundations.’ More importantly, he argued that the trial ‘was obligated to prove ‘the revolutionism (*revolutsionnost*) of an entire nation [Armenians],’ which did not exist.³⁴³ According to the viceroy, the Armenians loved three things: ‘their schools, church and money,’ and such people could not be revolutionaries.³⁴⁴

Nevertheless, Vorontsov-Dashkov warned the authorities that all steps had to be taken to avoid giving the impression that Armenians as an entire nation were persecuted. He was particularly worried about the apprehensions of well-known public figures and businessmen as he thought this could lead to discontent among the Russian Armenians.³⁴⁵ For the case of Melik-Azariants, Vorontsov-Dashkov wrote personally to the Ministry of Justice arguing that the detainment of such a prominent Armenian for unexplained money transactions from his business office was not convincing enough for his arrest.³⁴⁶

³⁴¹ A survey of Caucasian revolutionary parties, 1 September 1909 [14 September 1909], doc. no. 8 in Heydarov, *The Armenian Question in the Caucasus*, vol. 3, 250.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 7.

³⁴⁴ Khatissian, ‘The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part II),’ 105-6. A close observer of the trial process, Khatissian noticed the difference of opinion between St. Petersburg and Tiflis.

³⁴⁵ Vorontsov-Dashkov to the Minister of Justice, 23 April 1909 [6 May 1909], SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 880, ll. 78- 78 ob.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

Vorontsov-Dashkov's plea for reconsideration of the decision failed to convince Shcheglovitov, which added to the viceroy's dissatisfaction about the trial.³⁴⁷

In fact, the way the Dashnak trial was handled created the impression that Vorontsov-Dashkov feared. In order to garner support from both Armenians and the European circles, the Dashnaks, considering themselves as the true representatives of the Armenian nation, depicted the trial as an act of oppression against the Armenians by Tsarist Russia. The chief of the Special Section of the Police Department, Evgenii K. Klimovich, asserted that the Dashnaks indeed had a diverse following among the Russian Armenians as of 1909 owing to their popularity during the Armenian struggle with Tsarism between 1904 and 1907. Not only was this true, with a successful tactical move, the Dashnaks made this phenomenon 'a pan-Armenian question' rather than simply the affair of a revolutionary party, and won the hearts and minds of many.³⁴⁸

A common theme emphasized in the writings of the Dashnaks was the diverse profile of the arrested Armenians in the trial process. Reflecting this line, a prominent member of the Western Bureau, Khachatur Malumian, known by his nom de plume Emmanuel Aknuni, wrote that 'People were searched indiscriminately, the office of the Armenian Catholicos, the head of the whole Armenian Church; the author who preached new life and new thought; the most ignorant peasant who cannot even read; the millionaire who enjoys life: the labourer who toils; the merchant who does not recognize any world outside his store...in short, the whole Transcaucasus from one end to the other, and the Armenian people living there, every man, every class. That is the characteristic line in this "adventure."³⁴⁹ Another Dashnak was lamenting that the whole nation was being accused as subversives of 'high treason.'³⁵⁰

According to Malumian, Lyzhin took his orders from St. Petersburg, particularly from Stolypin. It was believed that the trial was politically motivated and all the trial procedure

³⁴⁷ Shcheglovitov later claimed that he did not have any conflict with the viceroy during the trial and the viceroy did not interfere with the trial process. Shchegolev, 421.

³⁴⁸ A survey of Caucasian revolutionary parties, 1 September 1909 [14 September 1909], doc. no. 8 in Heydarov, vol. 3, 235-261.

³⁴⁹ Aknuni, 15.

³⁵⁰ Mikael Varandian, *Le conflit arméno- géorgien et la guerre du Caucase* (Paris: M. Flinikowski, 1919), 131.

was formulated to make a case with a predetermined conclusion.³⁵¹ Under these circumstances, the Dashnaks convened their fifth world congress in Varna in August 1909. One of the resolutions taken in this congress was that preparations for an armed resurrection in ‘Russian and Turkish Armenia’—circumstances permitting—were to be organized. Soon, it was decided that terror was going to be carried out on all Russian gendarmerie units in the Caucasus.³⁵² *Droshak* was lamenting that ‘with a historical blindness, we naively believed that Russia was the “traditional” protector of the Armenians.’³⁵³

In this period, the Dashnaks also intensified their relations with the Second International, of which they had full membership by 1910, to garner support against the Tsarist persecution.³⁵⁴ Reiterating their resolution in their congress in Varna, they called other socialist parties of the Russian Empire for a full-scale fight against Tsarism in their report to the congress of the Second International in Copenhagen in 1910.³⁵⁵ Both the Socialist International and the political parties of the Russian Empire, such as SRs and Kadets, expressed their support for the Dashnaks regarding their trial.³⁵⁶

As the Dashnaks were losing their operational capability in Russia, they were investing more of their energies in the Ottoman Empire. Tsarist pressure forced the party to cling more to their alliance with the CUP. Even after the massacres in Adana in April 1909, the Dashnaks decided to continue their alliance with the CUP, which they still saw as the only viable option both for the party and to improve the situation of the Ottoman Armenians. In the meantime, the Dashnaks were voicing their hardships and trying to turn public opinion against the Russians, which could put more pressure on them.

Among the Ottoman Armenians, where the Dashnaktsutun was still strong, this created an immediate response. It was reported that in the Armenian churches in Istanbul, anti-Russian speeches were made on Sundays about the ‘oppression in the Caucasus’ and

³⁵¹ Aknoui, 5-6; 16; 36.

³⁵² The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to Stolypin, December 1909, GARF, f. 102, OO (1909), o. 239, d. 14 (obshch.), l. 412.

³⁵³ Quoted in Berberian, ‘The Dashnaktsutun and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution,’ 16.

³⁵⁴ Ter Minassian, ‘Le mouvement révolutionnaire arménien,’ 562; Hovannisian, ‘Russian Armenia,’ 45.

³⁵⁵ ‘Rapport présenté au congrès socialiste international,’ 7-8; Dasnabedian, 92-93; Ministry of Internal Affairs to Vorontsov-Dashkov, October 1909, SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 1086, ll. 187-88.

³⁵⁶ Gregorian, 215.

messages of protests were sent to the representatives of the foreign governments and all opposition fractions in the Duma.³⁵⁷ The Russian vice-consul in Van, Sergei P. Olferev, warned that the anti-Russian propaganda of the Dashnaks given to the Armenian masses, particularly in the Russian border areas with the Ottoman Empire and Persian Empire, had to be stopped.³⁵⁸ The Ottoman diplomatic corps in Russia also responded as the Ottoman ambassador to St. Petersburg, Turhan Pasha, requested the release of an Ottoman Armenian who was arrested as a suspect in the Dashnak trial in 1910; however, it did not produce any results.³⁵⁹

Despite its negative side effects, the trial served its intended purpose for St. Petersburg. With the first phase of the trial, the Dashnak organization in the South Caucasus was seriously weakened.³⁶⁰ Even in places where it was previously very powerful, the party was ‘completely defeated.’³⁶¹ The leading cadres of the Eastern Bureau were either apprehended or fled abroad. Furthermore, the suspected affiliates of the party within the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie were weeded out. However, things were getting out of hand by 1910 as Lyzhin’s stern methods and the inclusion of a large number of Armenians from various backgrounds in the trial process began to attract serious criticism and complaints from various strata of Russian Armenians, whose support for the viceroyalty was of crucial importance. Now that the Dashnak threat in the South Caucasus was eliminated, the next phase of the trial took a different turn.

Slowing Down the Tempo: The Second Phase of the Dashnak Trial (1910–1912)

After being released by the Tsarist authorities, Mihran again went into hiding as the Dashnaks started another manhunt. This hide-and-seek game ended with the murder of

³⁵⁷ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Odessa to DP OO, 7 April 1910 [20 April 1910], GARF, f. 102, OO (1910) o. 240, d. 14 (obshch. ts.), ll. 36- 36 ob.

³⁵⁸ Olferev’s dispatch, 10 April 1910 [23 April 1910], SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 1086, ll. 259-261 ob.

³⁵⁹ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 99.

³⁶⁰ Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Department of General Affairs to the Department of Police, 20 June 1910 [3 July 1910], GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), o. 240, d. 14 (ch. 1), l. 158.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

Mihran in September 1910 at the Bataisk train station near Rostov-on-Don by a Dashnak hit man. The Dashnak vows to kill Mihran were finally fulfilled but their nemesis had already given Tsarist authorities enough ammunition to cripple the Dashnak organization in the South Caucasus.³⁶² Stolypin was pleased that one of the strongest organizations in a troubled region was added to the casualty list in his successful drive against the revolutionary movement. As the viceroy wrote to the Tsar, the Caucasus was a very peaceful place by 1910 compared with the mess when he came in. In the aftermath of the 'revolutionary storm,' the viceroy went on, there was not a significant revolutionary organization left in the Caucasus.³⁶³

Smaller parties such as the Himmat and the Specifists had already been crushed. In the immediate aftermath of the revolutionary period, the effectiveness of another Armenian party, the Hnchaks, was considerably reduced in the Russian Empire due to internal disputes and leadership problems.³⁶⁴ By the end of 1911, the Hnchaks were reported to have lost their organization in the Caucasus and were not considered a threat by the Tsarist administration. According to the Tiflis gendarmerie, no organization affiliated with the Hnchaks existed in Tiflis; there were only separate members, who had ties with the Persian organization of the party.³⁶⁵

The most capable of them, the Dashnaktsutiun, was also seriously weakened with the ongoing trial. The Tsarist officials were claiming that, thanks to the efforts of the judiciary and the police, as well as the anti-Dashnak attitude of the conservative elements of the Armenian society, the Dashnaktsutiun lost much of its power in the region, although it was difficult to say for certain that the party gave up all hope.³⁶⁶ As the trial continued and included a massive number of Armenians, the lamentation of the Dashnaks

³⁶² The chancellery of the viceroy of the Caucasus to OO, 16 February 1911 [1 March 1911], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 334, ll. 229- 229 ob; The chancellery of the viceroy of the Caucasus to OO, 5 March 1911 [18 March 1911], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 334, ll. 236-39.

³⁶³ Illarion I. Voronstov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za piatiletie upravleniia Kavkazom* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1910), 4-5.

³⁶⁴ Geifman, 111; Ter Minassian, 'Aux origines du marxisme arménien,' 92; Hovannisian, 'Russian Armenia,' 45.

³⁶⁵ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 29 April 1911 [12 May 1911], GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), o. 240, d. 14 (prod.), l. 70.

³⁶⁶ Petrov's report to the Minister of Internal Affairs, 16 April 1911 [29 April 1911], RGIA, f. 821 o. 7, d. 355, ll. 4; 25-25 ob.

about the continuing legal process found a greater audience. In Europe, the Second International declared its support for the Dashnak trial.³⁶⁷ The length of the apprehension and the poor physical condition of Tsarist prisons were criticized both by the Dashnaks and others.³⁶⁸

As a result, Lyzhin, ‘a creature of the ancient regime’—as he was called by the Dashnaks—increasingly became the centre of criticism.³⁶⁹ Demonized in the accounts by the Dashnaks and the liberal Russian press, the prosecutor and the allegations about the party were now under close scrutiny because of the rumours of misconduct in the trial of the Novorossiysk republic.³⁷⁰ In one of these scornful articles, it was argued that in the Ministry of Justice, there was much evidence about Lyzhin’s past misconduct and ‘the fate of many Armenians lied at the hands of such a moral monster and criminal prosecutor.’³⁷¹ Apart from Lyzhin, his patron Shcheglovitov was also under fire. Known as ‘Stolypin’s lackey,’ the minister was accused of using the judiciary machine for political purposes, where accusations about the problematic evidence and false witnesses were made.³⁷²

Coupled with the earlier reservations of the viceroy about the implications of the trial process on the relations of his administration with the Armenians, the authorities began to be less resolute. The first phase of the trial had already achieved the main task of eliminating the Dashnaks as a threat to stability and pushing this further would only complicate things. Accordingly, the number of arrests and raids significantly dropped and many of the detainees were released by 1911. Soon, in May 1911, the prosecution completed the indictment. The Dashnaks were accused of actions between 1905 and 1909 against the Russian government with an aim to ‘change the existing method of administration set by the fundamental laws and replace it with a federal democratic

³⁶⁷ Gregorian, 215.

³⁶⁸ Kerensky, 80; Aknouni, 20.

³⁶⁹ ‘Rapport présenté au congrès socialiste international,’ 7.

³⁷⁰ Aknouni, 35; Varandian, *L’Arménie et la question arménienne*, 70-1.

³⁷¹ Promulgation of the resolutions of the Fifth World Congress of the Dashnaktsutun (Translation from *Droshak*), September 1909, SSSA, f. 153, o. 1, d. 3281, ll. 44-47 ob.

³⁷² Witte, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 2, 486. In his interrogation by the Provisional Government in 1917, Shcheglovitov dismissed the allegations that he persecuted the Armenians or the Armenian Church on the instructions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Shchegolev, 422. There were similar allegations on the minister with his role in another sensational trial in the same period, the Beilis affair (1911-13).

republic, of which the Caucasus was a part with an autonomous administration.³⁷³ To this end, the indictment accused the party of organizing assassinations of various Tsarist officials and conspiring against the Tsar and the royal family.³⁷⁴ One hundred fifty-nine members of the Dashnaktsutun would head to the final session of the trial to be held in the capital in early 1912.

The Dashnaktsutun toward the Final Session

By 1910, the Dashnaks were aware of their precarious fortunes in Russia; this forced them to resume their alliances in the Persian and Ottoman empires. Owing to their problems from Tsarist persecution, the Dashnaktsutun's stance was becoming increasingly anti-Russian. In the Persian Empire, the Dashnaks continued to complicate Russian interests led by the efforts of Yeprem Khan, 'the Garibaldi of Iran.'³⁷⁵ Apart from the Dashnak support for the constitutional forces, the party found other ways to irritate the Russian officials there. In that period, they were supported by the Ottomans, who were planning to undermine Russian interests in northern Persia. For that purpose, the Dashnaks were provided with arms by the Ottoman authorities and offered legal shelter, when needed, through the Ottoman diplomatic corps stationed in the region.³⁷⁶ Although this abated toward 1912, during the decline of the constitutionalist forces in the Persian Empire, it was still a concern for the Russian authorities.

In the Ottoman Empire, Malumian stated in 1910 that liberal Ottoman rule was preferable to Tsarist rule.³⁷⁷ For the Ottoman Armenians, the Dashnak detainees in Tsarist prisons

³⁷³ The verdict [of the final session] (17 January- 20 March 1912), SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 2368, l. 63; RGIA, f. 935, o. 1, d. 289, ll. 195; 213-214.

³⁷⁴ RGIA, f. 935, o. 1, d. 289, ll. 213-214.

³⁷⁵ An influential member of the Dashnaktsutun in Persia, Yeprem Khan was one of the commanders of the army of the Persian constitutionalists. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 100-2; Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 54-5.

³⁷⁶ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 99-100.

³⁷⁷ Sarkisyanz, 189.

were patriots and their numbers were considered exorbitant. Not only party members, but even non-Dashnak public figures like Krikor Zohrab or the Ottoman newspaper *Ikdam* were throwing their support to the Dashnaks under arrest. To help them, lawyers were sent to Russia and money was collected by the Ottoman Armenians.³⁷⁸

Another public figure concerned about the trial was the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul, Arsharuni. Just before the final session in St. Petersburg in a private conversation with the Russian Ambassador, Charykov, the Patriarch asked about the fate of the Armenians who would appear in the final session. The Patriarch requested a pardon by the Tsar for these people, who appeared to be ‘the black sheep of the community.’ He added that ‘the entire flock’ [the Armenians] should not be judged by these people and even those under arrest were ready to serve the Russian government. The Patriarch concluded that given the internal problems of the Ottoman Empire, ‘the future of the Armenian nation depended completely on Russia and the nation was counting on her [Russia’s] benevolence.’³⁷⁹

The ongoing anti-Russian propaganda by the Dashnaks about the trial was unquestionably damaging Tsarist prestige among the Ottoman Armenians, whose sympathies for Russia were otherwise growing. For Olferev, the Ottoman Armenians lost their hopes for reform by the Ottoman government and were looking for support from Russia. According to the vice-consul, ‘the majority of them [the Armenians] put all their hopes only to Russia.’³⁸⁰ This was an important dimension since the Russian government did not want to alienate the Ottoman Armenians, most of whom were living on its border with the Ottoman Empire. It was more so with the change of foreign policy dynamics in late 1911 when hostilities between Italy and the Ottoman Empire started and Russia and Britain handed over an ultimatum to the Persian government. Particularly, the situation of

³⁷⁸ The Dispatch of Charykov, 15 March 1911 [28 March 1911], GARF, f. 102, OO (1911), o. 241, d. 14 (ch. 1), ll. 5- 5 ob; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 98-9.

³⁷⁹ The Ambassador in Istanbul to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2 January 1912 [15 January 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 44- 44 ob.

³⁸⁰ Olferev to the Staff of the Caucasus Military District, 26 December 1911 [8 January 1912], doc. no. 38 in *Türkiye’de Ermeni Meselesi (Rus Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Belgeleri)*, ed. Mikhail Baskhanov (Ankara: TTK, 2013), 525-26; Olferev to the Staff of the Caucasus Military District, 28 January 1912 [10 February 1912], doc. no. 39 in *ibid.*, 527-30.

the Ottoman Empire was getting more uncertain which made obtaining the sympathy of the Ottoman Armenians more crucial for Russia.

Equally important was the unravelling of the Dashnak collaboration with the CUP about the same time. Things had already begun to stagnate and the Dashnaks voiced their concerns over this situation in Eastern Anatolia to the CUP.³⁸¹ Olferev repeatedly hinted about this downward trend in the relations between the two parties throughout 1911. For the vice-consul, the Dashnaks lost confidence in the CUP and the break off would soon happen.³⁸² The Dashnaks also believed that their allies were gravitating toward a more 'nationalist' line.³⁸³ Meanwhile, the CUP had problems of its own as the general opposition to the party grew in the Ottoman Empire and as a result, they became less accommodating to the Armenian demands for reform.³⁸⁴ Therefore, it was no surprise that the sixth world congress of the Dashnaksutun in 1911 was quite grim about the future of the alliance with the CUP. The CUP was to be given a memorandum containing the demands of the party, and unless they were met, the alliance would be off the table.³⁸⁵

At this point, a quiet end to the Dashnak trial could help Tsarist interests concerning the sympathies for both Russian and Ottoman Armenians. The party was not a serious threat in the South Caucasus by early 1912 and the relations of the viceroyalty with the Russian Armenians were generally good. On the other side of the frontier, the Dashnaks were still influential among the Ottoman Armenians. Under the bleak circumstances the Ottoman Empire was in with the outbreak of war against the Italians, the sympathy of the Ottoman Armenians was essential, and the constant Dashnak anti-Russian propaganda was an enormous encumbrance for Russian foreign policy interests. Considering the downward

³⁸¹ Kaligian, 68.

³⁸² Olferev to the Staff of the Caucasus Military District, 20 February 1911 [5 March 1911], doc. no. 34 in Baskhanov, 515-16; Olferev to the Staff of the Caucasus Military District, 26 December 1911 [8 January 1912], doc. no. 38, in Baskhanov, 525-26.

³⁸³ Kevorkian, 151. Based on various diplomatic reports compiled by the British and French consuls regarding the CUP congress in Salonica in 1910, Dadrian claims that this congress was a cornerstone for the CUP's increasingly nationalist position, which intensified from then on. Vahakn N. Dadrian, 'The Secret Young Turk Ittihadist Conference and the Decision for the World War I Genocide of the Armenians,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 7, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 179; idem., *A History of the Armenian Genocide*, 179-80. Others, like Çiçek, disagree claiming that there was no such debate on the adoption of Turkism as a party policy in that congress. Kemal Çiçek, 'The Question of Genocidal Tendency in the Minority Politics of the Young Turks,' *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 33, no. 1 (2013): 1-2.

³⁸⁴ Kaligian, 93-4.

³⁸⁵ Libaridian, *Modern Armenia*, 145-8; Kaligian, 85; Minassian, 189; Kevorkian, 122.

trend in the Dashnak-CUP relationship, a smooth end to the trial could help Russia in its dealings with Russian and Ottoman Armenians. The case of the Dashnaktsutiun was getting even more attention in the capital as the hearings began in January 1912. The end of the trial was going to be quite unexpected for all the parties involved.

The Final Session (January–March 1912)

In late 1911 and early 1912, the final preparations were underway for ‘the trial of the 159,’ as the Russian press now referred to the final session. The Dashnaks on the list of 159 were being apprehended to be sent to the final session of the Dashnak trial in St. Petersburg. Along with them, 330 witnesses from various backgrounds and close relatives of the defendants were on their way to the capital.³⁸⁶ Among the witnesses were important Armenian figures such as Mayor Khatisian and Archbishop Sukias Parzian.³⁸⁷ The safety precautions were fairly tight as Tsarist police had been receiving disturbing intelligence about Dashnak plans for the trial for some time. At first, it was reported that the Dashnaks were seriously entertaining the idea of bribing some of the officials involved in the trial with the donations collected from Armenians all over the world.³⁸⁸ According to these reports, even Lyzhin and his close colleagues were going to be approached.³⁸⁹ Similar rumours of bribery continued to circulate among the Okhrana and gendarmerie correspondence throughout 1911; however, in the end they were dismissed by the Tsarist authorities.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁶ ‘Telegrammy,’ *Rech*, 20 December 1911 [2 January 1912].

³⁸⁷ Ibid.; Khatissian, ‘The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part II),’ 106-7.

³⁸⁸ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Odessa to DP OO, December 1910, GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), o. 240, d. 14 (obshch. ts.), ll. 140- 140 ob.

³⁸⁹ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 21 February 1911 [6 March 1911], GARF, f. 102, OO 1910, o. 240, d. 14 (obshch. ts.), ll. 209- 210 ob; The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 30 May 1911 [12 June 1911], GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), o. 240, d. 14 (prod.), ll. 82-3.

³⁹⁰ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 28 July 1911 [10 August 1911], GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), o. 240, d. 14 (prod.), ll. 131-32.

More vehemently, these intelligence reports pointed out that, if bribery attempts were to fail and a harsh verdict was given, the Dashnaks would organize serious terrorist attacks.³⁹¹ Particularly toward the final session, the Dashnak frustration grew in conjunction with the speculations about a terrorist attack. If the verdict was harsh, which the Dashnaks considered a strong possibility, then they would organize a sensational assault on the presiding judges and possibly on other participants in the session.³⁹² According to the reports, three experienced hit men of the party (Dro, Nalbandian, and G. Ter-Akopian (aka Martyn)) would infiltrate the Senate building where the final session was going to be held with the help of an accomplice who worked in the state council.³⁹³ Under these circumstances, it was decided by the authorities that the trial would be held behind closed doors.³⁹⁴

For the final trial, a special hearing at the Governing Senate was convened.³⁹⁵ As it began in late January, the accused began to appear in the courtroom in groups. Just like during the first wave of the trial, in the courtroom of the Governing Senate, ‘millionaires with diamond rings in their fat fingers’ sat with the ordinary Armenians among the accused.³⁹⁶ The witnesses were present as well as the close relatives of the defendants. Led by the presiding judge Aleksei N. Krivtsov, Senators Vasilii I. Markevich, Nikolai P. Garin, Vladimir Ia. Bakhteiarov, and Anatolii I. Pollan would decide the fate of the Dashnaks. All of these judges had extensive experience with revolutionary organizations. Krivtsov

³⁹¹ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Odessa to DP OO, December 1910, GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), d. 14 (obshch. ts.), l. 140; The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 10 March 1911 [23 March 1911], GARF OO (1910), o. 240, d. 14 (prod.), l. 20.

³⁹² The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 20 October 1911 [2 November 1911], GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), o. 240, d. 14 (prod.), ll. 258 ob-259 ob.

³⁹³ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 15 November 1911 [28 November 1911], GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), o. 240, d. 14 (prod.), ll. 325-326 ob.

³⁹⁴ Kerensky, 80-1; Vladimir A. Dines, *Aleksandr Fedorovich Kerenskii* (Saratov: Izdatelskii tsentr Saratovskoi gosudarstvennoi ekonomicheskoi akademii, 1996), 45.

³⁹⁵ In June 1872, a new decree regarding political cases without a jury in the special office of the Governing Senate came into effect. Judges were chosen by the Tsar and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Certain exceptions to the Criminal Code of 1864 were allowed in these trials, like closing the trial to the public as it happened in the final session of the trial of the Dashnaksutun. William C. Fuller, *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881-1914* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1985), 119.

³⁹⁶ Utevskii, 45-6.

must have known about the Dashnaks beforehand when he began serving as the chairman of the Novocherkassk district court in 1902.³⁹⁷

The prosecution team was led by V.V. Sergeev and V.S. Aksakov.³⁹⁸ On the other side of the courtroom, there were many familiar faces for the judges. The Dashnaks were defended by a score of St. Petersburg-based elite lawyers, who were very experienced in political trials, as well as some Armenian (Dashnak) lawyers. Among the members of the defence team were Aleksandr S. Zarudnyi, Nikolai D. Sokolov, Sergei A. Andreevskii, Oskar O. Gruzenberg, Mioseï L. Goldshtein, Giorgii I. Khatisov (the mayor's brother), and Alexander Kerensky.³⁹⁹

Soon after the hearings began, things became very interesting as the defence raised serious allegations of misconduct by the prosecution. The senators were quite surprised and Krivtsov, the presiding judge became pale and then blushed as reported by Utevskaia.⁴⁰⁰ One of the lawyers who stood out in making the claims of perjury was Kerensky. A political trial specialist and a deputy in the State Duma, Kerensky, at a fairly young age, gradually built up a strong reputation with his performances in various political trials.⁴⁰¹ Kerensky argued that there were alterations on the statements of the accused such as 'unlike' to 'very like' or 'cannot recognize' to 'and also recognizes.' As a result, a team of experts had to be called to determine the extent of the forgery.⁴⁰² Other forms of misconduct were also claimed like the arrest of a certain Melkhonian when the real Melkhonian (with different name and patronymic) could not be found.⁴⁰³ Even more surprised by such bold claims, Krivtsov asked Kerensky: 'Do you know what will happen to you if you are mistaken?'⁴⁰⁴

³⁹⁷ *Pravitelstvuiushchii senat: (kratkii istoricheskii ocherk i biografii senatorov)* (St. Petersburg: Tipolitogr. S.-Peterburgskoi odinochnoi tiurny, 1912), 46-9.

³⁹⁸ The verdict [of the final session] (17 January- 20 March 1912), SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 2368, l. 62.

³⁹⁹ GARF, f. 112, o. 1, d. 729, ll. 2-14 ob.

⁴⁰⁰ Utevskaia, 46.

⁴⁰¹ Vladimir Fediuk, *Kerenskii* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 2009), 46-8.

⁴⁰² Richard Abraham, *Alexander Kerensky: The First Love of the Revolution* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1987), 53-4; Kerensky, 81; Utevskaia, 46.

⁴⁰³ 'Delo dashnaktsakanov,' *Tiflisskii listok*, 12 February 1912 [25 February 1912].

⁴⁰⁴ Kerensky, 81.

This was a chance the defence team had to take. Under such circumstances, Krivtsov stated that postponement of the session was not necessary but on the demand of the defence, a team of experts would be summoned to inspect the evidence.⁴⁰⁵ Soon, a panel of experts was formed by three members from St. Petersburg and three from the Caucasus.⁴⁰⁶ Meanwhile, Shcheglovitov ordered that all the material pertaining to the preliminary investigation be brought to the capital. Conceding that there were two or three problematic documents, the minister said that based on the allegations of the defence, a new investigation would be carried out by an investigator for important cases, Pavel A. Aleksandrov.⁴⁰⁷

Meanwhile, the witnesses continued to appear in the courtroom. Khatissian's statement at the trial stressed that the Dashnak activities in the South Caucasus were not against the Russian government *per se* but against Azeris and Tsarist officials 'who reeked in graft.' The mayor went on by arguing that the party, with its main target being the liberation of the Ottoman Armenians, did not oppose the Russian foreign policy interests in the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁰⁸ As the news about misconduct continued, it was reported that the mood among the judiciary circles was getting more favourable toward the accused.⁴⁰⁹

More importantly, speculations about forgery caused more pressure from liberal circles and public opinion, and hence making it difficult to sweep things under the rug.⁴¹⁰ Lyzhin was now under severe criticism and soon after the expert team came in, he lost his access to the rooms where the evidence was stored.⁴¹¹ Fortunately for Kerensky and other defence lawyers, as the experts worked on the documents, their initial opinions confirmed some of the allegations made by the defence.⁴¹² In an interesting turn of events, a police officer, Bakradze, who was involved in the preliminary investigation process, turned up

⁴⁰⁵ Utevskii, 47.

⁴⁰⁶ 'Telegrammy ot sobstvennykh korrespondentov i soobshcheniia po telefonu iz Baku,' *Zakavkazkaia rech*, 16 February 1912 [29 February 1912].

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Khatissian, 'The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part II),' 106-7.

⁴⁰⁹ Kerensky, 81.

⁴¹⁰ Utevskii, 46-7.

⁴¹¹ 'Telegrammy ot sobstvennykh korrespondentov i soobshcheniia po telefonu iz Baku,' *Zakavkazkaia rech*, 21 February 1912 [6 March 1912].

⁴¹² Kerensky, 81.

in the final trial and declared that there was a distortion between the statements and his signature that he gave to the gendarmerie and to Lyzhin.⁴¹³

In late March, the judges heard the last words of the accused. Two days later the verdict for the 159 Dashnak members was rendered. Most of the accused were acquitted while 52 of them were sentenced to administrative exile or a few years in prison.⁴¹⁴ The time spent under arrest was deducted from those who took term sentences, which alleviated some of their burden.⁴¹⁵ Only four of the accused were sentenced to hard labour (*katorga*): Sarkis S. Manasian (six years); Amazasp Ohanjanian, Ovanes Gazarian, and Arshak M. Muradov (four years).⁴¹⁶

Meanwhile, Aleksandrov was working on the investigation concerning the accusations against Lyzhin. Best known for his role in the investigation carried out against the Bolsheviks after their failed coup d'état in the summer of 1917, Aleksandrov made his way up through the judiciary machine in the capital as he was promoted to the post of prosecutor for important cases in 1909. Another well-known case in which he was involved was the assassination attempt on Witte.⁴¹⁷ As Aleksandrov was preparing for his trial, Lyzhin was dismissed by the order of Shcheglovitov in April 1912 until the allegations against him were cleared.

Aleksandrov's initial findings on Lyzhin confirmed most of the allegations of the defence. In his report, the doubts of some of the members of the police and judiciary who worked in the preliminary investigation were emphasized. In line with the experts' view, Aleksandrov confirmed that there were certain examples of perjury on the documents.⁴¹⁸ Aleksandrov also produced an account where he reflected on possible explanations regarding Lyzhin's conduct in the trial. The interesting aspect of Aleksandrov's report was his views of Lyzhin's personality and his mental condition during the trial process. Aleksandrov noted that Lyzhin was a very hardworking official who came in the morning

⁴¹³ 'Delo dashnaksakanov,' *Tiflisskii listok*, 12 February 1912 [25 February 1912].

⁴¹⁴ The verdict [of the final session] (17 January- 20 March 1912), SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 2368, l. 78 ob.

⁴¹⁵ Ostrovskii, 459-461.

⁴¹⁶ The verdict [of the final session] (17 January- 20 March 1912), SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 2368, l. 77.

⁴¹⁷ Aleksandr G. Zviagintsev, *Zhizn i deianiia vidnykh rossiskikh iuristov. Vzlety i padeniia* (Moscow: OLMA, 2008), 130-142.

⁴¹⁸ The Imperial Decree from the Governing Senate, 9 April 1912 [22 April 1912], RGIA f. 857, o. 1, d. 1264, ll. 171-72.

and worked solely on the trial until midnight. In 'rare unanimity,' several witnesses confirmed that Lyzhin often did not go home and his colleagues had to remind him to eat.

However, Lyzhin, aware of the terrorist methods of the Dashnaks, developed a certain level of fear and anxiety about being assassinated. As a result, he avoided sitting by the window and worked in the corner under the shutters. 'Under the circumstances similar to a war atmosphere,' Lyzhin began to believe that the accused were 'extremely evil,' which convinced him that they were certainly guilty of their crimes. Therefore, to Lyzhin, the trial was a means to 'clear the subversion in the Caucasus.' Aleksandrov concluded that the forgeries Lyzhin made were not selfish or personal but the result of an instinctive conviction that the accused were guilty.⁴¹⁹

Soon, Lyzhin was sent to a mental institution for psychiatric evaluation. Protecting Lyzhin, Shcheglovitov was still claiming that the mistakes were not done on purpose by Lyzhin, who was involved only in some of them.⁴²⁰ Moreover, the minister alluded to the difficult conditions of the trial and the enormous workload Lyzhin was under.⁴²¹ Although the verdict was more favourable than the Dashnaks anticipated, they still felt bitter about the sentences given the confirmation of Lyzhin's misconduct, which they immediately appealed to the higher courts.⁴²²

Conclusion: 'Ended with a Puff'

The grand trial of the Dashnaktsutiun, which shook the Russian Armenians for several years 'ended with a puff,' as Vorontsov-Dashkov put it. Looking at the end result, the viceroy believed that this could have been handled without making such noise. As he was

⁴¹⁹ GARF, f. 112, o. 1, d. 757, ll. 72- 72ob.

⁴²⁰ 'The Sentences on Russian Armenians: Examining Magistrate's Negligence,' *The Manchester Guardian*, 28 May 1912.

⁴²¹ Handwritten notes of I.G. Shcheglovitov, July 1912, RGIA, f. 1405, o. 539, d. 675, ll. 3- 3 ob.

⁴²² 'Delo N.I. Lyzhina v ministerstve iustitsii,' *Novoe vremia*, 9 May 1912 [22 May 1912].

concerned with the implications of such a grand political process on the Russian Armenians from the start, the viceroy was nevertheless happy to observe that in the aftermath of final session ‘not only did the Russian Armenians not break away from Russia, but even Turkish Armenians persistently aimed for Russian patronage.’⁴²³

Why did it end like this? Obviously, the forgery scandal was a major factor as it had a direct influence on the opinions of the judges. Although the documents under scrutiny were a very tiny part of an enormous body of evidence, it worked in favour of the defendants both technically and psychologically. Various scholars also speculated that improved relations between the Russian administration and Russian Armenians, as well as increased Russian interest in the Armenian question in the Ottoman Empire around 1912 played a role in this outcome. The favourable end of the trial could be used to garner Russian and Ottoman Armenian sympathies in such a critical period.⁴²⁴ In his memoirs, Kerensky also supports this view by claiming that ‘this outcome helped Russia increase its prestige among the Turkish Armenians.’⁴²⁵

Indeed, the favourable outcome was helpful for garnering the sympathies of both Russian and Ottoman Armenians toward Russia who mainly inhabited the Russian-Ottoman border regions at a time when there were Russian concerns over the fate of the Ottoman Empire. Given the state of the Russian judiciary, it could be suspected that the verdict was a result of political interference from above in line with Russia’s imperial interests. Although this claim needs more than circumstantial evidence, it is entirely possible, particularly considering the criticisms the Russian judiciary machine under Shcheglovitov and the Russian interests concerning the Ottoman Armenians.⁴²⁶ Furthermore, the role of the lawyers for the Dashnaksutiun in obtaining the favourable outcome was also crucial.⁴²⁷ Given the credentials of these talented lawyers in political trials, this was a key element in the final session. Most of these lawyers were affiliated

⁴²³ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 7.

⁴²⁴ Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 52; Oganessian, 166; Dasnabedian, 94-5; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 31.

⁴²⁵ Kerensky, 81.

⁴²⁶ Witte, *Vospominaniia*, vol. 2, 486; 493-95.

⁴²⁷ Suny, ‘Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule,’ 135; Dasnabedian, 94-95.

with the Russian liberal circles, which also helped to pressure the judiciary authorities, both before and during the final session.⁴²⁸

Criticism of the trial process notwithstanding, by 1912 the trial achieved its original aim: the elimination of the Dashnaktsutun from the South Caucasus as a political force. As a mass trial, it also helped the vicereignty improve its relations with the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie as they were weeded out of the Dashnak elements. As the viceroy wrote to Prime Minister Kokovtsov in May 1912, the influence of the Dashnaktsutun on the Armenians faded and 'the Armenian nationalist movement was weakened and at any rate it was not threatening state order.'⁴²⁹ This was a far cry from the picture in 1907 when the party represented everything the Russian government hated: It had a mass national following and had experienced extensive terrorist activity both at home and abroad. The party was also a part of the international socialist network and an uncontrollable force complicating the Russian policies in the neighbouring empires. The image of the Caucasus in general and the Armenians in particular was that of a troublesome revolutionary and with their strong organization in the South Caucasus, the Dashnaks were an integral part of that.

Both Stolypin and Vorontsov-Dashkov knew that this could be reversed and the Armenians, too important to be left out because of their internal and external significance, could be accommodated into the regime's needs if necessary steps were taken. The most essential of these steps was to crush the Dashnaks since the loyalties of the church and the bourgeoisie could not be secured unless the Dashnaks were gone because of the party's influence on them. To do that, instead of Vorontsov-Dashkov's milder and gradualist approach, St. Petersburg opted for a grand trial aimed at destroying the Dashnak powerbase even if it shook the entire Russian-Armenian community until the job was done.

As Mihran was giving away the secrets of his former party, the Tsarist police carried out mass arrests, raids, and interrogations during the first phase of the trial orchestrated by Lyzhin. More than a thousand Armenians, from various backgrounds, were arrested in

⁴²⁸ Dasnabedian, 94.

⁴²⁹ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Kokovtsov, 12 May 1912 [25 May 1912], Diakin, 642-43.

the first couple of years into the trial. In two years' time, the Dashnak powerbase in the region was crushed and its influence over the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie was greatly reduced. Nevertheless, the party continued to disturb the Tsarist authorities with its increased anti-Tsarist stance in the Ottoman and Persian Empires as well as in Europe.

'Searching by night! Imprisonment by day! This has been the 'political life' in the Caucasus since 1908, where, by the regulation of Tzarism [*sic*], the Armenian people are pronounced dangerous, and out of the pale of law's protection.'⁴³⁰ This was how a prominent Dashnak described the case. Besides the Dashnak depiction of the trial as a Russian drive against Armenians, allegations about the prosecution and other procedural concerns about the process had negative implications for both Russian and Ottoman Armenians. By 1910, as the trial seriously weakened the party in the South Caucasus, the Tsarist authorities, in line with Vorontsov-Dashkov's reservations, slowed down. Many of the detainees were released and fewer arrests and raids were carried out from then on. Soon after the reading of the indictment in May 1911, 159 Dashnaks were heading to St. Petersburg for the final session of the trial to be held in January 1912.

The final session in the Governing Senate witnessed an interesting turn of events with the allegations of forgery against Lyzhin. As pressure was mounting on both Lyzhin and the judges, the verdict was more favourable than most Dashnaks expected when they were packing for St. Petersburg in late 1911. On top of these light sentences, Lyzhin was now under investigation. The initial conclusion was that Lyzhin, whose mental condition was not healthy, committed perjury. By mid-1912, he was sent to a mental institution for further evaluation while the Dashnaks were heading to the higher courts of appeal.

Around 1912, the Russian foreign policy imperatives on the Ottoman Empire were changing and their interest in the Ottoman Armenians was growing. Although the trial left some of the Dashnaks quite bitter and anti-Russian, the party's general anti-Russian stance abated with the end of the trial and the revived Russian interest in the Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire. Some of the acquitted Dashnaks were even penning

⁴³⁰ Aknouni, 5.

articles depicting Russia as the saviour of the Ottoman Armenians, whose future became uncertain with the worsening situation of the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, in the South Caucasus, thanks to the trial, the Dashnaks were no longer a serious threat for the Tsarist authorities in the region, who were now worried about another movement that had more potential for mayhem in the Russian Empire.

CHAPTER 3

ST. PETERSBURG AGAINST TIFLIS: THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN ADMINISTRATION AND THE ARMENIAN CHURCH (1907–1912)

Introduction

‘A stupid law about the Armenian Church properties angered the Armenian soldiers of lower ranks. In the Georgian regiment, 19–20 Armenians gathered to flee with arms. Cartridges were stolen. An Armenian clergyman was organizing this.’ This was what the War Minister Aleksei N. Kuropatkin initially made of the Tsarist decision to confiscate Armenian Church properties in 1903 in his diary.⁴³¹ The events that followed Golitsyn’s risky decision to confiscate the properties of the Armenian Church in 1903 demonstrated the importance of the Armenian Church for the Armenians in the South Caucasus. Even the revolutionary groups stood up for the defence of the Armenian Church, which in theory they opposed. As soon as Vorontsov-Dashkov arrived in Tiflis in 1905, he knew that normalization of the relations with the Armenian Church was essential for the effective control of the Armenian population, especially against the increasing appeal of the radical political parties.

This conservative institution could help normalize the relations between the Tsarist administration and the Armenians, who were quite attached to their church for its historical significance, which was ‘even apart from a religious standpoint’ in the words of the viceroy.⁴³² Additionally, an understanding with the church could help curb the influence of the Armenian revolutionary parties in the region.⁴³³ Once good relations were maintained at home, the Catholicos could then be an effective agent for Russia to

⁴³¹ Kuropatkin, 202.

⁴³² Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim Kraem*, 8-9.

⁴³³ Hovannisian, ‘Russian Armenia,’ 42.

garner the sympathies of the Ottoman Armenians for its foreign policy aims. Therefore, for Vorontsov-Dashkov, the reformulation of an understanding with the Armenian Church was essential and mutually beneficial. Provided that the Armenian Church was allowed to keep its primacy in the cultural and educational matters of the Armenian lives in the South Caucasus, as well as its autonomous status, it would support the Russian administration. This was a crucial aspect for Echmiadzin, particularly considering the rise of the secular forces, challenging the monopoly of the church on cultural matters.

The annulment of the decree of 1903 upon the recommendation of Vorontsov-Dashkov and handing back the privileges and the rights of the Armenian Church were steps in this direction. However, there was an additional factor in the equation: a legacy of the policies pursued by Golitsyn. It was the Dashnaktsutiun that provided the muscles for Echmiadzin when the Russian authorities initiated the confiscation in 1903. This added to the popularity of the party in the eyes of the masses and the Armenian clergymen, among whom the party gained several sympathizers because of the leadership it demonstrated against the Russian authorities. The Dashnaks' domination of the meeting for the election of councils in Echmiadzin in 1906 was a bad omen for the Russian authorities.

By 1907, both the central government and the viceroyalty were in agreement that the Armenian Church needed to be brought to the regime's side but its revolutionary elements must be weeded out. This would go hand in hand with the general anti-revolutionary drive in the empire. Thus, it was no surprise that Stolypin had asked the viceroy to start the purge of the revolutionary elements from the Armenian Church after hearing about the Dashnak-dominated Echmiadzin meeting of 1906. However, there was a major problem: Catholicos Khrimian.

As an enormously influential figure among the Armenians, Khrimian was known to have had links with the Armenian revolutionaries for a very long time.⁴³⁴ It was reported that Khrimian was under the strong influence of the Dashnaks, who actually ran the affairs of

⁴³⁴ Because of his affiliation with the Armenian revolutionaries, Khrimian was dismissed as the Armenian Patriarch and exiled by the Ottoman authorities to Jerusalem, where he resided before being elected as the Catholicos in 1892.

the Catholicosate.⁴³⁵ Coupled with his disobedient actions against the Russian authorities in the aftermath of the decision of confiscation, the Catholicos was considered by Stolypin as a threat to the internal stability in the region. In early 1907, as a part of an immediate plan of action against the Armenian Church, Stolypin contemplated pressuring the Catholicos to resign. It was the warnings of the viceroy that deterred Stolypin from going farther. Aware of Khrimian's influence on the Armenians, the viceroy reminded Stolypin that any pressure on the ailing octogenarian 'would be taken as violence on the Armenian-Gregorian Church and the Armenian nation.'⁴³⁶

Instead of such provocative policies, Vorontsov-Dashkov believed that the Catholicos could be talked to about the elimination of revolutionary elements within his church. Soon, the Catholicos complied with the instructions of the viceroy and the members of the Armenian clergy who had conspicuous links with the revolutionary movement began to be purged. For instance, the rector of the Shusha Armenian seminary, Arshak Chilinkarian, was arrested and later exiled for his anti-government activities.⁴³⁷ Another eminent Armenian clergyman, the former secretary of Catholicos, Nerses Melik-Tangian, was also monitored by the Tsarist administration for his sympathies for the Dashnaktsutun and was barred from taking important posts.⁴³⁸ In the meantime, the viceroy noted that the influence of the Dashnaks on the Russian Armenians was already falling and one of the reasons for that was the newly adopted socialist programme in the Vienna congress of 1907, which was 'insulting to the church.'⁴³⁹

These small steps were hardly sufficient for Stolypin, who thought that there were also structural reasons for the recent problems with the Armenian Church and more comprehensive changes had to be made regarding the organization of the Armenian Church in Russia. For Stolypin, the current status given to the Catholicosate enabled the Catholicos 'to unite around himself Armenian parties of local and foreign origins.' Thus,

⁴³⁵ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2674-5.

⁴³⁶ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Stolypin, 29 January 1907 [11 February 1907], in Diakin, 742-3.

⁴³⁷ The Department of Police to DDDII, 19 October 1907 [1 November 1907], in Heydarov, vol. 1, 544.

⁴³⁸ Chancellery of the viceroy of the Caucasus to the governor of Astrakhan, 27 March 1908 [9 April 1908], in Heydarov, vol. 1, 548-9.

⁴³⁹ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim Kraem*, 14-6.

Echmiadzin 'became to a certain degree a hotbed for the revolutionary movement among the Russian Armenians.'⁴⁴⁰

In July 1907, Stolypin informed the viceroy of what he had in mind for the future of the Armenian Church in Russia. According to Stolypin, the administration of the Armenian Church needed a thorough review and his first recommendation was about the closed voting system for the elections of the Catholicos.⁴⁴¹ This would prevent any pressure on the voters by revolutionaries. What Stolypin ultimately expected from the reorganization of the Armenian Church was the equalization of its status with other non-Orthodox churches in the empire and 'the removal of its exclusive independence, which it used for the harm to the interests of the government at the moment.'⁴⁴² Nevertheless, the premier accepted the viceroy's view that such critical changes should be carried out in a more favourable time, perhaps after Khrimian's death.⁴⁴³ Stolypin did not have to wait too long as news about the worsening health of Khrimian increasingly circulated in the newspapers in October, giving him the opportunity to launch the administrative changes he wanted.

The Russian Strategy in the aftermath of Khrimian's Death and the Catholicosate Elections of 1908

On his deathbed, Khrimian was contemplating two things: the financial troubles of the Echmiadzin Seminary and naming his deputy. Although his current deputy, Surenian, stood out, Khrimian passed away on October 29 without making a final decision.⁴⁴⁴ The Armenian clergy immediately began preparations for the elections as Surenian, as the

⁴⁴⁰ Quoted in Werth, 'Glava tserkvi, poddannyi imperatora, 127-28.

⁴⁴¹ Stolypin to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 2 July 1907 [15 July 1907], in Pozhigailo, *P.A. Stolypin: Perepiska*, 156-7.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 157.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ 'Poslednie dni katolikosa,' *Tiflisskii listok*, 4 November 1907 [17 November 1907]; Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 141.

deputy to Catholicos, would assume the duties of the Catholicos until the election was held in late 1908.⁴⁴⁵ While the Tsarist bureaucracy, especially the Ministry of Internal Affairs, was preparing for major changes concerning the rights and regulations of the Armenian Church, the reception of Khrimian's funeral in January 1908 confirmed their suspicions. The laurels attached to his coffin by the Dashnaks, such as 'to the first revolutionary Khrimian' or 'to the founder of revolution,' signalled the authorities in St. Petersburg that something very urgently needed to be done.⁴⁴⁶

Stolypin had already begun pressing for the changes he suggested. The most critical of these was about the exclusive autonomous status of the Catholicosate, which was granted by the imperial statute of 1836. According to this statute, the Catholicos was elected for life and could not be removed by the central government, which Stolypin found irritating especially in the light of what happened between 1903 and 1905. Stressing a gamut of problems this status created, the premier was again insisting on transforming the Catholicos into an ordinary head of a church, who would be under the direct control of the central government just like the other non-Orthodox churches in the empire.⁴⁴⁷

In a similar vein, the regulations governing the election of the Catholicos were also offensive to Stolypin. To sustain the ecumenical significance of Echmiadzin, the Ottoman Armenians were included in the Catholicosate elections, which they dominated owing to their greater number of eparchies (and hence, delegates). Therefore, the results of the elections would reflect the interests of the Ottoman Armenians rather than those of Russian Armenians, which according to Stolypin was an anomaly. As a result, the Catholicoses were mostly Ottoman subjects and did not know Russian, which for Stolypin was another source of trouble.⁴⁴⁸ For instance, Khrimian was not a Russian Armenian, did not know Russian, and had extensive links with Armenian revolutionary organizations. Besides, owing to his immense popularity among the Armenians, he rallied the Armenian resistance against the Russian government in the aftermath of the

⁴⁴⁵ To hold the Catholicosate elections, there was one year waiting period after the death of the Catholicos. Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı*, 92.

⁴⁴⁶ The governor of Erevan, V.F. Tizengauzen to the chancellery of the viceroy, 31 January 1908 [13 February 1908], in Diakin, 745.

⁴⁴⁷ The Minister of Internal Affairs to the viceroy of the Caucasus, 16 December 1907 [29 December 1907], in Diakin, 749-50.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

confiscation of the Armenian Church properties in 1903. What annoyed Stolypin were the regulations governing the Armenian Church, which allowed the election of men such as Khrimian and their almost untouchable status after they were elected.

It was obvious that the priority of the premier was the formation of a subservient Catholicos who could be useful first and foremost for the domestic needs of the Russian administration in the Caucasus rather than foreign policy purposes.⁴⁴⁹ Stolypin was aware that with the inclusion of Ottoman Armenians in the election process, the ecumenical significance of the post was retained, which was expected to help Russian foreign policy interests in the Ottoman Empire. However, for Stolypin, this aspect was secondary as he even proposed sacrificing the ecumenical significance of the Catholicosate by turning it into an ordinary non-Orthodox church that would be responsible only for the Russian Armenians.⁴⁵⁰

Meanwhile, in the first half of 1908, the press in the capital was also critical of the autonomous status of the Armenian Church and its role in Armenian politics. On the pages of *Novoe vremia*, ‘the unacknowledged rule of the non-existent Armenian state [the Armenian Church]’ was criticized because of the recent conflict of the Armenian Church with the Russian authorities. It was argued that owing to its immense influence on Armenians and its autonomous status, the Armenian Church demonstrated that it would not mind being at loggerheads with the Tsarist authorities when Tsarist policies ‘did not correspond to the interests of the Armenian people.’⁴⁵¹ Not surprisingly, reiterating Stolypin’s perspective, *Novoe vremia* called for curtailment of the privileges of the Catholicos, who needed to be transformed ‘from the head of the Armenian nation’ to a mere ‘head of the Armenian Gregorian Church,’ dealing only with ecclesiastical affairs.⁴⁵²

Vorontsov-Dashkov, perhaps in light of his experience as the viceroy, knew that these measures would be a menace to the stability he created. He responded that the Armenian

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ The attitude of the Russian press on the Armenian question, 17 September 1908 [30 September 1908], in doc. no. 11, Heydarov, vol. 3, 322.

⁴⁵² Ibid., 325.

masses and the Armenian clergy were not the enemies of the Russian government and they were pacified immediately after the annulment of the confiscation decree. What the Russian government needed was a rapprochement with the Armenians, not creating grounds for hostile relations by means of unwise policies like demoting the Catholicos. If, however, these measures were taken against his recommendation, there could be only two outcomes: 'Either the Catholicos at Echmiadzin would submit to those demands [of the Russian government] and then would submit to the authority of another Catholicos elected somewhere in Turkey or the Catholicos [at Echmiadzin] would ignore the law and himself be the head of all Armenians.'⁴⁵³ In other words, for a legitimate Catholicos, ignoring the Ottoman Armenians was not a good idea. Abolishing his title would only make his flock unhappy and would only serve the purpose of uniting all revolutionary elements against the government.⁴⁵⁴

The viceroy also did not share Stolypin's negative view of the Ottoman Armenian dominance of the Catholicosate elections. For Vorontsov-Dashkov, this was a boon because it helped sustain the ties between Ottoman Armenians and Russia.⁴⁵⁵ Regarding the qualities of the Catholicos, Vorontsov-Dashkov did not spare his words. Knowing Russian and being a Russian subject were hardly the qualities for a regime friendly Catholicos. What Khrimian did against the Russian administration after the confiscation decree had no relevance to his not being a Russian subject. He did what any Catholicos would do when such drastic measures against his church were implemented.⁴⁵⁶

Vorontsov-Dashkov's view of the discussions concerning the Armenian Church was also supported by the military. In a Council of Ministers meeting in January 1908, Fedor F. Palitsyn suggested that 'Armenians were the only part of the Caucasian population on which they could count unconditionally.'⁴⁵⁷ Similarly, Foreign Minister Izvolskii opposed the initial framework drawn by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and warned that

⁴⁵³ The reply of the viceroy of the Caucasus to the statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 16 December 1907-30 January 1908 [29 December 1907-12 February 1908], Diakin, 746-48.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.; Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 142-3

⁴⁵⁵ Diakin, 746-8.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.; Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 142-3. In an interesting note, the viceroy argued that if these measures were implemented on the Russian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox clergymen of Russian origin would react similarly. Diakin, 746-8.

⁴⁵⁷ Pliaskin, 290.

any changes that could be perceived by Armenians as another drive against their church had to be avoided. Izvolskii claimed that the demotion of the Catholicos would deprive Tsarist Russia of prestige among the Ottoman Armenians, whose sympathies Russia needed. As for Stolypin's proposal for the change of election procedures, Izvolskii argued that it would create discontent both among Russian and Ottoman Armenians and considering the importance of the Ottoman Armenians residing in the border regions, this would hardly be a sensible policy.⁴⁵⁸

These disagreements went on until mid-1908 when the premier and the viceroy exchanged letters while basically insisting on their previous opinions. Although Stolypin agreed not to implement substantial reforms while the seat of the Catholicos was vacant, he certainly wanted some changes to be made.⁴⁵⁹ In June 1908, Vorontsov-Dashkov reiterated his stance on the points made by Stolypin. On the issue of the knowledge of Russian, the viceroy conceded that speaking Russian was not necessarily a useful quality for the Catholicos. He argued that the only Russian speakers among the Armenian clergy were the younger generation who might be more easily influenced by the revolutionary propaganda and sympathizing with the social democratic tendencies. Things could be sorted out by an interpreter as was traditionally done.⁴⁶⁰

As for Stolypin's insistence on the issue of being a Russian subject, Vorontsov-Dashkov added that among the Russian Armenian clergy, at the moment there were no suitable candidates possessing the authority and general respect and, if insisted this 'could cause very undesirable complications and excessive worsening of the already painful Armenian question.'⁴⁶¹ In a similar vein, the demands aimed at curbing the influence of the Ottoman Armenians by equalizing the votes of Ottoman and Russian Armenian delegates in the elections or abolishing the ecumenical significance of the Catholicos would be met with resistance by the Ottoman Armenians.⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁸ Werth, 'Glava tserkvi, poddannyi imperatora,' 129; Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 144-5.

⁴⁵⁹ Stolypin to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 24 May 1908 [6 June 1908], in Pozhigailo, *P.A. Stolypin: Perepiska*, 249-51.

⁴⁶⁰ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Stolypin, 12 June 1908 [25 June 1908], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 274, ll. 29 ob-30.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., ll. 31-31 ob.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

Another aspect concerned the rights of the Armenian Church and the seminaries, which were producing revolutionaries both for the nationalist and socialist camps. Most of the Dashnak leadership as well as prominent Armenian SDs like Mikoyan were graduates of these seminaries, which were the only means for lower-class Armenians to receive higher education in the absence of a university in the Caucasus. The exclusive control of them by the Armenian Church, which allowed for liberties like education in Armenian, had been a matter of debate since the 1880s. The viceroy again suggested a more prudent approach and reported to St. Petersburg that a major change on seminaries would be untimely and would encourage the Dashnaks to spread the rumours that the Russian government had plans to restrict the privileges and rights of the Armenian Church.⁴⁶³ By August 1908, after intensive correspondence, the two could only agree on the use of a closed ballot system in the upcoming elections, and not making substantial changes while the seat was vacant.

This difference of opinion was apparent when the Council of Ministers' meeting was organized to sort things out in August 1908. The main participants of the debate concerning the Armenian Church were Stolypin; the assistant Foreign Minister, Nikolai V. Charykov, the chief procurator of the Holy Synod, Petr P. Izvolskii; the director of the Department of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions, Viacheslav Vladimirov, and Vorontsov-Dashkov. Stolypin began by reiterating his position that the extraterritorial and autonomous authority of the Catholicos was abused. The recent examples of this abuse were the avoidance of taking the oath in Russian, non-compliance by the Catholicos regarding the marriages, and resistance to supervision in Armenian educational institutions administered by the Armenian Church.⁴⁶⁴ The lack of government supervision of the Armenian seminaries and the Ecclesiastical Academy in Echmiadzin were particularly annoying for Stolypin. The growing influence of the revolutionary

⁴⁶³ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Stolypin, 24 May 1908 [6 June 1908], in Diakin, 790-1; Vorontsov-Dashkov to Stolypin, 17 July 1908 [30 July 1908], in *ibid.*, 791-2.

⁴⁶⁴ On the measures for regularization of the administration of the Armenian-Gregorian Church in Russia, 26 August 1908 [8 September 1908], doc. no. 99, *Osobyie zhurnaly Soveta Ministrov Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1908 god* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2011), 314-5.

parties on these schools and the Armenian clergy was a result of this lack for the premier.⁴⁶⁵

As Stolypin saw it, this ‘completely abnormal situation’ regarding the Armenian Church could only be stopped if the Catholicos was reconfigured as an ordinary head of a church just like other church hierarchies in the empire, even if this would damage the potential benefits the ecumenical significance of the church would bring to Russia.⁴⁶⁶ With such a change, it would be possible to remove the Catholicos by the central government when needed. Moreover, he repeated his proposals about the changes in the election system and the necessary qualities of the Catholicos (knowledge of Russian, etc.).⁴⁶⁷ Not surprisingly, Vladimirov seconded all of his superior’s arguments. In essence, the two men from the Ministry of Internal Affairs put domestic concerns about the Catholicosate ahead of the foreign policy benefits it would bring.⁴⁶⁸

Vorontsov Dashkov countered Stolypin’s argument about demoting the Catholicos to an ordinary head of church, which would enable him to be removed from his post. Non-Russian Armenians probably would not recognize such a removal, which would undermine not only the ecumenical significance but also his legitimacy among both Russian and Ottoman Armenians. Adding his opposition regarding the qualities of the Catholicos proposed by Stolypin, the viceroy noted that changes concerning the future organization of the Church should wait until the election of the new Catholicos.⁴⁶⁹

Agreeing with the viceroy on the timing of the changes, Charykov was against the proposals put forward by Stolypin. The Foreign Ministry believed that the Catholicosate within the borders of the Russian Empire was an important asset for its relations with Armenians.⁴⁷⁰ Charykov stated that those proposed measures could hurt the religious feelings of the Armenians, which could lead to the transfer of the Catholicosate to a place outside the borders of the Russian Empire.⁴⁷¹ The chief procurator of the Holy Synod,

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 315-6.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.; Diakin, 755.

⁴⁶⁸ Werth, ‘Glava tserkvi, poddannyi imperatora,’ 129-31.

⁴⁶⁹ *Osobyie zhurnaly Soveta Ministrov Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1908 god*, 317.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 318.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

Izvol'skii, was also in disagreement with the proposals of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, some of which he believed to be in conflict with the canonical laws of the Armenian Church. More importantly, 'outbursts of fanaticism were easily incited every time religious questions were handled carelessly, which were closely connected to tribal questions.' This was the case with the discussions about the status and the rights of the Catholicos at the moment.⁴⁷²

As Werth points out, the difference of opinion in the meeting was basically a repetition of the clash of different priorities displayed by Stolypin and Vorontsov-Dashkov, who was supported by another critical institution in this matter, the Foreign Ministry.⁴⁷³ For Stolypin, the current status of the Armenian Church gave the Catholicos too much freedom of action as had happened in the aftermath of the 1903 decree. During that period, the anti-government character of the activities of the church was fuelled by Armenian clergymen with revolutionary affiliations such as the rector of the Tiflis seminary, Tigranian, or the rector of the Echmiadzin seminary, archimandrite Mesrop Ter Movsisian.⁴⁷⁴ Thus, the priority had to be reorganizing the Armenian Church in such a way that it would not allow such acts of insubordination and eliminating the revolutionary elements within the clergy. Although Stolypin was aware of the damage these changes could inflict on the ecumenical significance of the church, he nevertheless noted that foreign policy matters should not overshadow the domestic necessities, which conflicted with them.⁴⁷⁵

The premier was stating that the proposed measures were beneficial both for the Russian government and the Russian Armenians so they would hardly cause any unrest among Russian Armenians.⁴⁷⁶ Stolypin's opponents on this had a more intricate view of the potential damage of the changes to the status of the Armenian Church. Unlike Stolypin, both Vorontsov-Dashkov and Izvol'skii were aware that the negative implications of the demotion of the Catholicos to an ordinary head of a Church would not be limited to

⁴⁷² Ibid., 318.

⁴⁷³ Werth, 'Glava tserkvi, poddannyi imperatora,' 131-32.

⁴⁷⁴ *Osobyie zhurnaly Soveta Ministrov Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1908 god*, 315-16; Stolypin to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 24 December 1906 [6 January 1907], in Pozhigailo, P.A. *Stolypin: Perepiska*, 123.

⁴⁷⁵ *Osobyie zhurnaly Soveta Ministrov Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1908 god*, 317-19.

⁴⁷⁶ Statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Council of Ministers, 17 August 1908 [30 August 1908], in Diakin, 753-5.

Russian foreign policy interests; it would also create discontent among Russian Armenians. Particularly after the recent problems, they believed that this move would be interpreted by the Russian Armenians as an act of oppression toward their church and would undermine domestic stability in the South Caucasus, the most critical priority of Stolypin regarding the region. In such a case, the Catholicosate could even be moved out of the Russian Empire, depriving Russia of a critical asset that could be used for domestic and foreign policy. As for the revolutionary affiliations within the church, the viceroy believed that they would immediately disappear if the Dashnaks lost their power in the region—for him, this was exactly the case.

The other dimension of the disagreement between Tiflis and St. Petersburg on this question, as was demonstrated in the strategy to deal with the Dashnaktsutun, related to the ongoing conflict between the viceroy and the higher echelons of the Tsarist bureaucracy since the day he arrived in Tiflis.⁴⁷⁷ The wide administrative authority of the viceroy, who had close personal ties with the Tsar and his conciliatory policies—especially his attitude toward the nationalities in the region—had raised several eyebrows in the capital. As in the case of Dashnaktsutun, Vorontsov-Dashkov's prudent line of action about the Armenian Church must have been too lenient for Stolypin and others. Vorontsov-Dashkov, aware of this friction and St. Petersburg's longtime attempts to subordinate the viceroyalty, complained and told his daughter 'Fools, they will be fed up with the Caucasus if I leave.'⁴⁷⁸

At the end of the meeting, although the Council of Ministers agreed with Stolypin's point about the balance between the domestic and foreign policy concerns related to the Armenian Church, it was agreed that such critical changes should be made after the elections, in the presence of the new Catholicos. An interdepartmental commission was to be formed and with the new Catholicos, it would work on the necessary changes in the Statute of 1836 governing the Armenian Church. Meanwhile, Vorontsov-Dashkov was entrusted to modify the existing election laws and add the use of closed ballots in the upcoming elections, which was the only practical change that resulted from the heated

⁴⁷⁷ Werth, 'Glava tserkvi, poddannyi imperatora,' 132.

⁴⁷⁸ Boris V. Ananich, ed., *Vlast i reformy: ot samoderzhavnoi k sovetskoi Rossii* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1996), 578.

exchange of opinions.⁴⁷⁹ As Nicholas II approved these resolutions, the attention of both the capital and Tiflis turned to Echmiadzin for the upcoming elections.

The Elections of 1908

While the ministers and the viceroy were discussing the future of the Armenian Church in the Russian Empire, election preparations were under way. The candidates for the Catholicosate would be an integral part of the debate. When the elections began in the church of the Illuminator in November, the two candidates who stood out were Mateos Izmirlian, the incumbent Armenian Patriarch at Istanbul, and Egishe Durian, the head of Izmir eparchy.⁴⁸⁰ A key factor in the elections was the attitude of the Dashnaksutium, whose popularity was running high at the time among both Russian and Ottoman Armenians. In line with the general attitude among the Ottoman Armenians, the Dashnaks decided to support Izmirlian in the elections, which made a critical difference.⁴⁸¹ In the closed ballot elections (the second round), Izmirlian got the most votes, outmatching Durian. Therefore, the names of Izmirlian and Durian were sent to St. Petersburg for the final approval of the Tsar.⁴⁸²

The viceroy knew about St. Petersburg's dissatisfaction with the election results and the Dashnak presence in the elections. Acknowledging that the two top candidates were Dashnak sympathizers, the viceroy still argued that it would be a very risky move not to approve one of them as the Catholicos, which would complicate Russia's relations with both Ottoman and Russian Armenians. Rather expectedly, Vorontsov-Dashkov was

⁴⁷⁹ *Osobyje zhurnaly Soveta Ministrov Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1908 god*, 318-9; Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 149-150; Werth, 'Glava tserkvi, poddannyi imperatora,' 131-32.

⁴⁸⁰ 'Telegrammy Tiflisskago Listka,' *Tiflisskii listok*, 6 November 1907 [19 November 1907].

⁴⁸¹ Arslan, 'II. Meşrutiyet Öncesinde Osmanlı-Eçmiyazin Katogigosluğu İlişkileri,' 354-5.

⁴⁸² Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı*, 96; Recep Karacakaya, 'İstanbul Ermeni Patriği Mateos Izmirliyan ve Siyasi Faaliyetleri,' *Ermeni Araştırmaları 1. Türkiye Kongresi Bildirileri*, vol. 1, ed. Şenol Kantarcı et al, (Ankara: ASAM, Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayınları, 2003), 392-3; Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 151.

backed by Izvolskii, who also urged the Tsar to approve one of the two candidates as the next Catholicos.⁴⁸³ Under these circumstances, in December 1908 Nicholas II approved Izmirlian as the next Catholicos.

Although not as politically minded as Khrimian, Izmirlian had been lenient with the efforts of Armenian revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire during the 1890s. An Ottoman minister once described Izmirlian as a man ‘who was busy with revolution and rebellion even in his dreams.’⁴⁸⁴ His continued sympathies with the Armenian revolutionary groups paved the way of his dismissal as the Patriarch in 1896 and he was sent to exile in Jerusalem. Only after the revolution of 1908, with the support of the CUP and the Dashnaks, Izmirlian was finally able to come back to Istanbul and soon was elected the new Patriarch in October 1908.⁴⁸⁵ The years of solitude in Jerusalem did not change Izmirlian’s character. During the ceremony of his consecration as the new Patriarch in October 1908, he skipped the procedural parts where he was supposed to express his loyalty to Abdulhamid II, which cost him the Ottoman imperial orders that the new patriarch would normally receive.⁴⁸⁶

Stolypin was not happy about the election results but there was little he could do about it. Nevertheless, he was not left empty-handed as he found practical ways to demonstrate his intention to ensure the obedience of Izmirlian. Upon his recommendation, procedural changes regarding the consecration process were made. The Catholicos traditionally was consecrated in Echmiadzin in the presence of representatives of the Tsarist administration in the Caucasus. Now, Izmirlian was informed that he had to present himself to the Tsar before formally taking up his post.⁴⁸⁷

Other symbolic changes aiming at trimming the honorary privileges of the Catholicos followed. Considering the privileges of the Catholicos and the unique status of his

⁴⁸³ Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 152-3.

⁴⁸⁴ Davut Kılıç, *Tarihten Günümüze İstanbul Ermeni Patrikhanesi* (Ankara: AKDİTYK Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2008), 212.

⁴⁸⁵ Simon Payaslian, ‘The Destruction of the Armenian Church during the Genocide,’ *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 153-4.

⁴⁸⁶ Zeynep Iskefiyeli, ‘Osmanlı Devleti Tarafından Ermenilere Verilen Nişan ve Madalyalar,’ in *Hoşgörü Toplumunda Ermeniler*, vol. 4, ed. Metin Hülagü (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi, 2007), 582-3.

⁴⁸⁷ Werth, ‘Glava tserkvi, poddannyi imperatora,’ 133; Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 153-4; RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 150-1.

church, Stolypin believed, the Catholicos was expected to provide exemplary service for the Tsar. However, recent experience demonstrated that not only was this not the case, but the actions of the Catholicoses were hostile to Russia.⁴⁸⁸ Upon Stolypin's instructions, the practice of awarding the new Catholicos with the order of Aleksandr Nevskii (only awarded to high-ranking members of the Russian Orthodox Church) and the allowance of 5,000 roubles was abolished. Stolypin believed that elevating the Armenian Church to the level of the Russian Orthodox Church was not fair since the latter worked closely with the Russian government whereas the representatives of the former 'were under the influence of political agitation and assisted the Armenian revolutionary movement.'⁴⁸⁹ Thus, awarding such actions with important orders or other excessive privileges would only be an 'an insult to the national feelings of all populations in the Caucasus save for the Armenians, in particular to those belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church.'⁴⁹⁰

Although Izmirlian's doctors recommended that he not go to Echmiadzin because of its climate, he was preparing to leave.⁴⁹¹ Meanwhile, the tension between Tiflis and the capital continued. Vorontsov-Dashkov complained to the Tsar that the higher bureaucracy of the capital still was frustrated by the existence of the viceroyalty, which they believed to 'take away the jurisdiction and rights of the central government.'⁴⁹² The difference of opinion regarding the last elections and the future of the Armenian Church was still being debated as Izmirlian was expected to show up in the capital.

The viceroy was aware that during the elections, various elements of the Armenian community would be present to declare their views about the future of the Armenian Church.⁴⁹³ This was hardly surprising for the viceroy since the presence of laity in the affairs of the Armenian Church was nothing new.⁴⁹⁴ However, this was not how Stolypin saw it, particularly given the Dashnak participation in that meeting, which confirmed his

⁴⁸⁸ Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 151-2.

⁴⁸⁹ RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, l. 150 ob.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., ll. 150 ob-151.

⁴⁹¹ Arslan, *Kutsal Ermeni Papalığı*, 84; Karacakaya, 392.

⁴⁹² Ananich, 578.

⁴⁹³ Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 154-5.

⁴⁹⁴ Each diocese sent two delegates for the elections of the Catholicos. In addition to the prelate of the diocese, the other delegate was a popularly elected layman. Abrahamian, *The Church and Faith of Armenia*, 37.

earlier suspicions. In a report to the viceroy, Stolypin stated that the meetings held during the elections had a political tone and the Dashnaks, who had the majority of the delegates in these meetings, attempted to impose their will on the Armenian Church and the new Catholicos, who was himself a Dashnak. Given Izmirlian's political stance, state authorities had to keep an eye on the new Catholicos, whose actions could be influenced by his political views.⁴⁹⁵

He added that the decisions taken in the congresses were not 'so much to the benefit for the Armenian Church and its establishment, but for achieving nationalist and separatist aims' led by the Dashnaktsutjun, which was harmful for Russia.⁴⁹⁶ For instance, the demands for democratization of the administration of the Armenian Church by allowing popular participation in the administration as well as in the elections would 'transfer the centre of gravity of all religious-economic affairs of the Armenians from the hands of the Catholicos, who was under the authority of the government authorities, to the hands of the people, or more precisely, to the hands of a leading party [i.e. the Dashnaktsutjun].'⁴⁹⁷ For Stolypin, this Dashnak influence on the affairs of the Armenian Church was alarming as it could be the 'first step for the creation of the religious and political autonomy of the Armenian population in the South Caucasus.' To stop this, the premier asked Vorontsov-Dashkov to tell the Armenians that their economic and religious well-being did not lie in aspiring to autonomy in the South Caucasus but in unity with Russia.⁴⁹⁸

As the date of Catholicos' arrival to the capital drew near, the newspapers in the capital were highlighting the problems that the dominance of the Ottoman Armenians in the Catholicosate elections was creating, in line with Stolypin's reasoning. Some even went so far as to advocate for the exclusion of the Ottoman Armenians from the elections. When the Armenian delegation headed by Izmirlian arrived in Russia through Odessa, the delegation members dismissed these ideas, noting that the individual qualities of the Catholicos were most important, not his citizenship.⁴⁹⁹ A few days later, Izmirlian was received by the Tsar where official words of courtesy and loyalty were exchanged and

⁴⁹⁵ Stolypin to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 8 May 1909 [21 May 1909], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, l. 3 ob.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., l. 4.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., ll. 3 ob-4.

⁴⁹⁹ Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 156-7.

other formalities were completed. After the meeting, the Tsar wrote to the viceroy that he had a very good impression of Izmirlian.⁵⁰⁰

The elections of 1908 and its aftermath demonstrated that differences between St. Petersburg and Tiflis regarding the reorganization of the Armenian Church remained. As Izmirlian was heading back to Echmiadzin to complete his consecration, the viceroy was content that there were no radical changes that could have upset the improving relations of his administration with the Armenians. The Dashnaks were fading in importance and their newly adopted socialist agenda would further damage their prestige, particularly in religious circles. Thus, maintaining amicable relations between the Armenian Church and the viceroyalty was a matter of time. However, Stolypin did not share the optimism of the viceroy as he still felt dissatisfied about the status of the Armenian Church, the Ottoman Armenian dominance in the elections and the Dashnak influence on the matters of the church. By 1909, Stolypin had learnt that making administrative changes regarding the status of the church or any imposition on the Catholicos was quite complicated because these moves could easily be perceived as acts of oppression. However, it was less so with eliminating the Dashnak influence on the Armenian Church. The recently initiated mass trial provided Stolypin a useful means to sort this out for good.

The New Catholicos Izmirlian (1909–1910) and the Impact of the Dashnak Trial on the Armenian Church

When Izmirlian arrived at the Echmiadzin station in late June 1909, he was beset by Armenian clergymen led by the current deputy, Surenian; some local Tsarist officials; and local Armenians. After the newly introduced obligatory visit to the Tsar, Izmirlian's address to the crowd was in a sense a counter-move. He stated that 'their aim was to defend the interests of the Armenian Church and the nation and to keep unshakable rights

⁵⁰⁰ Nicholas II to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 29 May 1909 [11 June 1909], RGIA, f. 919, o. 2, d. 2468, l. 56.

of the Catholicos of all Armenians in the limits of law.’⁵⁰¹ Aware of the intentions of some of the higher bureaucracy in the capital concerning the Armenian Church, Izmirlian was experienced enough to know that this could complicate Russia’s relations with the Armenians. Given his history of conflict with the authorities and ties with the Dashnaktsutun, he would do whatever he could to resist any changes aimed at restricting his rights as the Catholicos.

The discussions throughout 1908 about making changes concerning the status or the privileges of the Catholicos showed Stolypin how difficult this was. As the viceroy, the Foreign Minister, and others pointed out, any changes to these aspects of the church would risk offending Armenians. However, there was another way by which the Armenian Church could be a more regime-friendly institution. This was the ongoing trial of the Dashnaktsutun, which also included various Armenian clergymen. Despite the viceroy’s warnings about the complications of such a direct action, a mass trial had already begun in late 1908 upon instructions from the capital.

As the trial of the Dashnaktsutun was shaking the Caucasus, a series of speeches initiated by the rightists in the State Duma in December 1908 helped publicize the ties of the Armenian Church with the Armenian revolutionaries for the Russian public. In fact, these speeches targeted all of the non-Russian nationalities in the Caucasus and blamed them for their separatist activities. The Russian Armenians were one of the main targets in this campaign. Responding to an earlier speech of Baron Nolde, who dismissed the accusations of Armenian separatism in the region, Purishkevich started to bombard the viceroy with criticism. Starting his life in the fringes of the Empire, Purishkevich completed his education in Novorossiysk and Odessa. As one of the founders of the Union of the Russian People, his negative views on the minorities in the empire and the support for the Romanov dynasty were well known and perhaps owing to his familiarity with the corners of the empire, he made critical remarks about the Armenian Church.⁵⁰²

⁵⁰¹ Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 157-8.

⁵⁰² 3-ii sozyv *Gosudarstvennoi Dumi*, 19-29. Purishkevich is known mostly for his association with the murder of Rasputin .

Purishkevich argued that the Armenian Church ‘was the centre of Armenian separatism’ as attested by the history of the institution. As opposed to the views held by Vorontsov-Dashkov and Izvolskii, Purishkevich pointed out that the Armenian Church was a nefarious organization and it was futile for the government to adorn it with privileges or boost its prestige to obtain the loyalty of the Armenians. The church, along with cultural societies of the Armenians, would buttress the Armenian separatists, namely the Dashnaks, in the way of financial help and moral support.⁵⁰³ Another rightist, Nikolai E. Markov (Markov-II), also emphasized the subversive actions against the Russian administration demonstrated by the Armenian Church, which was ‘evolving into a secular state authority.’⁵⁰⁴

The speech met with bitter resentment from the Tsarist Armenians and the viceroyalty. Ranging from various cultural societies to the Armenian Church several Armenians bombarded the viceroy and the Ministry of Internal Affairs with telegrams of complaint in the first weeks of January 1909.⁵⁰⁵ The deputy to the Catholicos, Surenian, wrote to Stolypin that the Armenian clergy and Armenian people had always demonstrated unconditional loyalty to Russia and these malicious accusations had to be stopped. Stolypin himself opposed Purishkevich’s ideas and he also made it known to the viceroy that the Tsar sincerely thanked the Armenian Catholicosate and believed in its loyalty to Russia.⁵⁰⁶

Nevertheless, as mass arrests, raids, and interrogations intensified during 1909 as part of the Dashnak trial, the Armenian clergy became an open target for Lyzhin’s operations. One of the key characters on this subject was the former procurator of the Echmiadzin Synod, Frenkel, who occupied that post between 1903 and 1908.⁵⁰⁷ Acknowledging the links between Echmiadzin and the Dashnaks, Frenkel claimed that the last assassination attempt on his life in 1907 was carried out by the terrorist units of the Erevan committee of the Dashnaktsutun with the ‘blessing of the Echmiadzin clergy.’⁵⁰⁸ Thanks to their

⁵⁰³ Ismail-Zade, *Vorontsov-Dashkov: administrator, reformator*, 116-19.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁵⁰⁵ SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 54, ll. 1-78.

⁵⁰⁶ Stolypin to Vorontsov-Dashkov, January 1909, SSSA, f. 13, o. 3. d. 720, ll. 1-1 ob.

⁵⁰⁷ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2658.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 2660.

influence on the Armenian Church and Khrimian, Frenkel noted that the Dashnaks used Echmiadzin for their purposes. Important posts within the Church such as the Echmiadzin Synod and the chancellery of the Catholicos were captured by the Dashnaks while old clergymen were terrorized and some lost their posts.⁵⁰⁹ The most well-known Armenian seminaries, Kevorkian in Echmiadzin and Nersesian in Tiflis, were also under Dashnak influence.⁵¹⁰

According to the statement of the former procurator, there were several influential Armenian clergymen with intimate links to the Dashnaks. Corresponding to the progress in the Dashnak trial, a drive against the revolutionary affiliates within the Armenian clergy was launched. One of the high-profile names among the arrested Armenian clergymen was Archimandrite Koriun. Born and christened as Vahan S. Saakiantz in the Ottoman city of Van, he soon took the clerical name Koriun as he began living in the Echmiadzin monastery. Koriun served as the secretary of the Catholicos and in 1905, he was assigned to Elizavetpol, where his association with the Armenian revolutionary movement both against the Russian government and the Azeris raised eyebrows.⁵¹¹ Frenkel claimed that Koriun was in charge of organizing the Dashnak armed organizations in Elizavetpol, where he awarded the Dashnak fighters with land of the Armenian Church paving the way for the emergence of a 'whole quarter of Dashnaks' in the region.⁵¹²

Koriun had already been arrested and brought to trial in military court in 1907 but he was acquitted of the charges after an appeal process.⁵¹³ This decision did not satisfy various Tsarist bureaucrats in the South Caucasus and under various protests he was again

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Richard G. Hovannisian, 'Simon Vratzian and Armenian Nationalism,' *Middle Eastern Studies* 5, no. 3 (October 1969): 198.

⁵¹¹ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 2, 535-36; HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2662. Khatissian notes that during the clashes with the Azeris, he sent financial support for the Armenians of Elizavetpol to 'the Committee of Defense' via Koriun. Khatissian, 'The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part I),' 46.

⁵¹² HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2662.

⁵¹³ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 2, 437-38. The release of Koriun, a clergyman with revolutionary affiliations, was interpreted by the Ottoman consul at Tiflis, Feyzi Bey as a move demonstrating Russian patronage behind the Armenians, which seems quite short-sighted. The translation of the telegram from the Ottoman consul in Tiflis, Feyzi Bey, 16 March 1908, doc. no. 12, in *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Rus İlişkileri*, vol. 3, 31-33.

arrested in November 1908.⁵¹⁴ The archimandrite was now accused of being one of the ringleaders of the Elizavetpol Central Committee of the Dashnaktsutun along with Ter-Nikolai and Ter-Sogomonov.⁵¹⁵ The intelligence suggested that Koriun, a man ‘even feared by the local Russian authorities’, was involved with the assassination of several members of the police and the gendarmerie as well as the Armenians who did not submit to the authority of the Dashnaktsutun.⁵¹⁶ In May 1909, the 42-year-old clergyman was found guilty for his affiliation with the Dashnaktsutun, and he was sentenced by the military court to hard labour for 8 years, and stripped of his title and clerical rights.⁵¹⁷ Meanwhile, he was also included in the trial of the Dashnaktsutun as new evidence about his association with it kept coming.

Another high-profile clergyman on Frenkel’s list was Garegin Satunian, the head of the Tiflis eparchy, who was also the head of the commission of donations during the Armenian-Azeri clashes.⁵¹⁸ According to Frenkel’s statement, in the meantime, Satunian was responsible for organizing the Dashnak fighting organization in early 1906.⁵¹⁹ Meanwhile, it was reported from Tiflis that the Holy Synod at Echmiadzin was still in the hands of Dashnak sympathizers like Bishop Mesrop Ter Movsesian. The reports added that another influential clergyman with Dashnak sympathies, Tigranian, remained in Echmiadzin to keep the Dashnak threat alive on the clergy.⁵²⁰ As the party began to lose its power during the trial, another charge was needed for its influence on the church. Soon, immediate removals of suspected clergymen began. One of them was a member of the Echmiadzin Synod, Iusik Zohrabian, who according to Frenkel, ‘was dreaming of independent Armenia all his life.’⁵²¹ Archimandrite Egishe Aharonian, a member of the Karabagh Consistory, and priest Agop Sarikian of Vladikavkaz were also considered

⁵¹⁴ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 2, 521-2; Ostrovskii, 522.

⁵¹⁵ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 2, 437-38.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.; Ostrovskii, 522.

⁵¹⁷ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 254, f. 2, 535-36; ‘Sentence on an Armenian Archimandrite,’ *The Times*, 18 March 1909.

⁵¹⁸ Stepan Garibdzhanian, *Deiateli Armianskoi tserkvi (XIX-XX vv.): Biograficheskie ocherki* (Erevan: Edit Print, 2005), 114-5.

⁵¹⁹ HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2661-62.

⁵²⁰ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 11 May 1910 [24 May 1910], GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), o. 240, d. 14 (Obshch. ts), l. 60.

⁵²¹ Stolypin to Catholicos Mateos Izmirlian, 24 November 1910 [7 December 1910], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 325, l. 12; HIA, Nic., s. 197, b. 255, f. 4, 2661-62.

suspects. As they were charged with taking part in the activities of the Dashnaktsutun, it was requested by St. Petersburg that until the end of the trial these clergymen had to be removed from their posts.⁵²² Without delay, on the suggestion of the deputy, Surenian, Echmiadzin Synod soon approved the dismissal of all these clergymen by the end of 1910.⁵²³

Reorganization in the Armenian Church under Izmirlian

As the clergymen whose links with the revolutionaries were weeded out from the Armenian Church, the debate between St. Petersburg and Tiflis continued concerning its governance. A key item was the post of procurator, the representative of the Russian government in Echmiadzin Synod. If the Armenian Church were to be an obedient institution, the role of procurator was of paramount importance as he could observe what was going on in Echmiadzin for the Russian authorities and even influence the members of the Synod. Apart from observing the activities of the Echmiadzin Synod, the procurator was expected to inform the ministries of justice and internal affairs as well as the viceroyalty about legal issues and supervise the elections.

For the viceroy, former procurator Frenkel's performance had a lot to do with the friction between the Catholicos and the Echmiadzin Synod, and hence the Russian administration and the Armenian Church.⁵²⁴ The viceroy blamed the 'untactful actions' of procurator Frenkel for the emergence of all misunderstandings.⁵²⁵ True, the aging and ailing Khrimian was under the influence of some revolutionary types between 1905 and 1907; however, rather than a 'fault-finding and petty' procurator, like Frenkel, what the Synod

⁵²² Stolypin to Catholicos Mateos Izmirlian, 24 November 1910 [7 December 1910], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 325, l. 12.

⁵²³ The deputy to the Catholicos of all Armenians [Surenian] to the Minister of Internal Affairs, 17 December 1910 [30 December 1910], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 325, l. 15.

⁵²⁴ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Stolypin, 12 June 1908 [25 June 1908], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 274, ll. 32-32 ob.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

needed according to the viceroy was a 'serious and a vigilant' jurist who 'would possess not only outstanding service and moral qualities but also exceptional knowledge of Armenian language, the history of the Armenian Church and its canonical laws.'⁵²⁶

Such a bureaucrat as a procurator would indeed make things easier for the Russian authorities. In 1909, a suitable candidate was found in Melik-Ohandzhanian as he was appointed as the new procurator. However, as the representative of the Russian government, the procurator needed a better status and salary to make an impact on the members of the Echmiadzin Synod. The viceroy repeatedly wrote to Stolypin about an increase in the procurator's salary.⁵²⁷

Nonetheless, the Ministry of Internal Affairs still was discontented with the regulations governing the elections because it could not change them as it wanted. In May 1910, Aleksei N. Kharuzin expressed this discontent to the governor of Erevan, Tizengauzen. According to Kharuzin's sources, the candidates in the elections of 1908 were under Dashnak pressure and they were predetermined long before the formal election results, which made the closed ballot method useless.⁵²⁸ The governor pointed out one single fact behind this: the dominance of the Ottoman Armenian delegates over the Russians, which put more weight on the preferences of the Ottoman delegates, among whom the Dashnaks were influential.⁵²⁹ Both Kharuzin and his superior, Stolypin, knew that their hands were tied on this because of the ecumenical significance but looked for other practical changes to supervise the activities of the Armenian Church and any uneasy elements within it.

One of these changes was the use of the churches for political meetings, which had been a source of acrimony for some time. During the elections for councils under the Armenian Church in 1910 it happened again. It was reported that party meetings in churches created fights between the parties, which included indecent swearing and

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁵²⁷ The viceroy of the Caucasus to the Minister of Internal Affairs, 9 October 1909 [22 October 1909], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 499, ll. 2-4; The deputy of the viceroy of the Caucasus to A.P. Nikolskii, 18 May 1910 [31 May 1910], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 499, ll. 1-1 ob; The deputy of the viceroy of the Caucasus to A.P. Nikolskii to Emmanuil A. Vatatsi, 31 May 1910 [13 June 1910], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 19, d. 499, l. 5.

⁵²⁸ Kharuzin to Tizengauzen, 24 May 1910 [6 June 1910], in Diakin, 762.

⁵²⁹ Tizengauzen to Kharuzin, 24 May 1910 [6 June 1910], in *ibid.*

threats, hardly appropriate for a holy place.⁵³⁰ Already annoyed by the role of the Armenian political parties in the church affairs, Stolypin stated that the churches should be used only for religious purposes and these political meetings in the churches had to be outlawed.⁵³¹ Soon, in November 1910, it was forbidden to organize political meetings in the Armenian churches in the Russian Empire.⁵³²

Despite these practical changes, Stolypin was still unhappy that his grander proposals about the administration of the Armenian Church had not materialized because of the opposition demonstrated by the viceroy and various other ministries. In the absence of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' proposals, there were violations of law by the members of the Echmiadzin Synod and the Catholicos according to Stolypin and Kharuzin.⁵³³ To conduct a thorough review of the problems noted by Stolypin, an experienced bureaucrat from the Department of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions, Aleksandr V. Petrov was sent to Tiflis.⁵³⁴ The ailing Izmirlian was quite bitter about this open lack of confidence in his administration and the restrictions on his actions as he was entertaining the idea of leaving the post.⁵³⁵ However, the fate did not let Izmirlian leave on his own as he died of a heart attack in December 1910, leaving another year for debate between St. Petersburg and Tiflis as to the future of the Armenian Church.⁵³⁶

The Armenian Church and Its Privileges in Education

Izmirlian's funeral was carried out in a more relaxed atmosphere as a token of improved relations between the Russian administration and the Armenian Church. The Dashnaks still sent a big wreath of red cloves but, more importantly, in an unprecedented fashion,

⁵³⁰ The governor of Tiflis to the viceroy, 13 October 1910 [26 October 1910], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 334, l. 2.

⁵³¹ Stolypin to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 8 November 1910 [21 November 1910], in Pozhigailo, *P.A. Stolypin: Perepiska*, 386-7.

⁵³² Ibid.; Avagyan, 47.

⁵³³ A.P. Nikolskii to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 23 October 1910 [5 November 1910], in Diakin, *Natsionalnyi vopros*, 521-2; Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 162.

⁵³⁴ Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 162.

⁵³⁵ Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 193.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 162.

the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church were present along with other high-ranking bureaucrats of the Caucasian viceroyalty.⁵³⁷ As soon as the funeral ended, the Armenian Church began preparations for the elections, which were to be held in late 1911. Meanwhile, there was activity among Russian officials in St. Petersburg and Tiflis regarding the situation of the Armenian Church.

Between November 1910 and December 1911, during a series of conferences led by Stolypin on the Interdepartmental Conference on ‘the Question of the Organization of Education for *Inorodcheskoe*, *Inoslavnoe* and *Inovernoe* Population’, the issue of minority schools was taken up. Prior to this conference, the head of Department of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions, Kharuzin complained that the Catholicos still had still too much control over the schools and he was violating the laws regarding them.⁵³⁸ Despite the anxiety displayed by the representative of MVD, who believed that any privilege given to the Armenian Church could lead to separatist tendencies, the representative of the viceroyalty stated that the nationalist strivings of Armenians were directed against the other nationalities in the region not against the Russian administration.⁵³⁹

The viceroy saw that the Armenian Church could be brought to the regime’s side not by coercion but by maintaining mutual interests. He reported to the Tsar that Armenian parish schools taught Russian language, Russian history, and geography of the Russian Empire as mandatory subjects and further changes would be made.⁵⁴⁰ Moreover, more and more Armenian children were enrolled in the Russian state schools rather than their parish schools. The number of Armenian students enrolled in the Russian state schools (both elementary and secondary) was surpassing the Armenian parochial schools, both elementary and secondary.⁵⁴¹ Keeping such a privilege of the church intact was reasonable and it would strengthen the loyalty of the Church to the Russian administration.

⁵³⁷ *Russkoe Slovo* excerpt, 1911, no. 294, in Diakin, 765; Tunian, 163.

⁵³⁸ A.P. Nikolskii to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 23 October 1910 [5 November 1910], in Diakin, 521-2.

⁵³⁹ John W. Slocum, ‘The Boundaries of National Identity: Religion, Language, and Nationality Politics in Late Imperial Russia,’ (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1993), 237-38.

⁵⁴⁰ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za piatiletie upravleniia kavkazom*, 49.

⁵⁴¹ Gregorian, 198.

The views of the viceroyalty were upheld at the end of the conference and the Armenian Church retained its right to administer parish schools as the only non-Orthodox church. However, the seminaries under its control were considered to have an excessive number of students. In addition to reducing the number of students in these institutions, the students coming from abroad would be more closely monitored and a strict religious education would be allowed. In line with the viceroy, the assistant Minister of Education, Lev A. Georgievskii believed that unlike the Catholic Church, the Armenian Church was on the side of the government now.⁵⁴²

As the issue of schooling continued to occupy an important place in the agenda, Petrov—from whom Stolypin was expecting a full report about the Armenian schooling—arrived in the Caucasus. Upon arriving in the region, he immediately saw how deeply the Armenians were attached to their parish and higher schools, and their autonomy. More importantly, what vexed Petrov were the ideas and the teaching methods employed in these schools, in which an ancient map of Armenia or an Armenian national painting could be used. The situation was even worse in the higher Armenian education in the academies and seminaries, which produced the local teachers who would then reproduce these national ideas in the parish schools. According to Petrov, contrary to the resolutions held in the inter-ministerial conference, these institutions were religious only in name when in fact they were providing general education.⁵⁴³

Petrov noted that for the Armenian clergy and the laity, the school affairs boiled down to ‘the creation of their own national schools of all types, from the lowest to the highest, with almost full removal of educational supervision [by the government] from them’. To Petrov’s dismay, the viceroyalty did not object to this.⁵⁴⁴ In his report to the Department of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions, Petrov argued that leaving Armenian religious schools without government supervision would be a mistake.⁵⁴⁵ Instead of granting privileges, the schools under the Armenian Church should be run according to

⁵⁴² Slocum, 240-41.

⁵⁴³ Petrov’s report to the Minister of Internal Affairs, 16 April 1911 [29 April 1911], RGIA, f. 821 o. 7, d. 355, ll. 5-6.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., l. 188 ob.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., ll. 186- 186 ob.

the general rules for other schools in the Caucasus.⁵⁴⁶ Petrov's recommendation of a 'full reorganization of the Armenian schools' alluded to increased centralization which would enable the government to have more control over this critical issue.⁵⁴⁷ Aware of the importance of the Armenian schools for the Armenians, Petrov stated that in the short term 'constructive-organizational' measures instead of 'inhibitory-inspectional measures' would be more useful for eliminating Armenian nationalists from Armenian schools. In the long run, expanding Russian schools, the advent of more Russian settlers in the region, and increased activities of the Russian charitable-educational societies would also attract Armenian students to enrol in Russian schools and hence minimize the problems concerning Armenian schooling.⁵⁴⁸

Petrov's observations during his time in the Caucasus confirmed the suspicions held by Stolypin from 1907 onward. The privileged status of the Armenian Church and the Catholicos was seen by both as the main barrier to increased centralization and a more rigorous control of the Armenian Church by central government. Not entirely happy about the stance of the viceroyalty on this, Petrov also included his opinions on the upcoming Catholicosate elections, for which he advocated what Stolypin had demanded earlier for the elections of 1908. According to Petrov, the Catholicos must speak Russian, and be a Russian subject, and the Russian Armenians' vote share must increase.⁵⁴⁹ As the preparations for the elections continued and rumours of candidacy were in the air, the premier was gunned down in Kiev in September 1911.

The Elections of 1911

Until his assassination, Stolypin managed to minimize the Dashnaks' influence on the Armenian Church and made some practical changes to the administration of the church. However, this was a far cry from the ideal he had wanted since 1907. His successor,

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., l. 189 ob.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., ll. 9-10.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., ll. 10, 11 ob.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., ll. 8; 188- 188 ob.

Aleksandr A. Makarov, immediately wrote to the viceroy in October 1911 about the upcoming elections in December. Not content with the dominance of the Ottoman Armenians, Makarov noted that the proportion of Russian Armenian delegates needed to be increased, which would be in line with the interests of both the Russian government and the Russian Armenians.⁵⁵⁰ To Makarov's dismay, this was not realized. Because of its importance for the Armenians, more fundamental changes to the privileges and rights of the Catholicosate were very difficult to implement, particularly considering the opposition shown by the viceroyalty and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Under such circumstances, the character of the new Catholicos was considered extremely important by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The most controversial candidate was Malachia Ormanian, whom the Dashnaks immensely hated for a long time. As the former Patriarch at Istanbul (1896–1908), Ormanian was unpopular among the revolutionary elements that saw him as a close associate of Abdulhamid II, and for this, an attempt on his life was made in 1903. The Dashnaks were relieved when Ormanian finally had to step down as the Patriarch immediately after the revolution of 1908.⁵⁵¹ Favoured both by the Russian government and the Russian press, Ormanian was thought to have opportunities to challenge Durian and Surenian in the elections.⁵⁵² However, he was excluded from the elections because of pressure from the Armenian National Assembly in Istanbul and the Dashnaks, who were quite strong among the Ottoman Armenians.⁵⁵³

As a result, the race was left to the deputy of the Catholicos, Surenian, and the former Istanbul Patriarch, Durian, who were already the favourites. Surenian was the main preference of the conservatives while Durian was supported by the Dashnaks, who were convinced that Durian would get the majority of the votes in the second round. In the first round of the elections, Surenian and Durian got the most votes, as expected.⁵⁵⁴ However,

⁵⁵⁰ Makarov to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 7 October 1911 [20 October 1911], in Diakin, 737.

⁵⁵¹ Kevorkian, 65; Kılıç, 231.

⁵⁵² Diakin, 766. Although he had supporters in St. Petersburg, Ormanian was not the favourite candidate of the viceroy, who characterized Ormanian 'a crafty diplomat of the Turkish type who should be feared.' Alexander Khatissian, 'The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part III),' *The Armenian Review* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1950): 100.

⁵⁵³ Werth, 'Glava tserkvi, poddannyi imperatora,' 134.

⁵⁵⁴ RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, l. 18; Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 173.

a large protest was held before the voting process. Arguing that the exclusion of Ormanian from candidacy was illegal, 28 delegates possessing 32 votes walked out.⁵⁵⁵ According to the election laws, it was illegal for the delegates to walk out without voting.⁵⁵⁶ The election process went on and contrary to the expectations of the Dashnaks, Surenian unexpectedly got the most votes in the second round by getting 58 for and 30 against whereas Durian got 57 for and 32 against.⁵⁵⁷

This situation created yet another feud between St. Petersburg and Tiflis. It was now Makarov, the successor to Stolypin as the Minister of Internal Affairs, who claimed that the elections had to be held again because of the protest. Like his predecessor, Makarov was also bitter about the Ottoman Armenian dominance in the elections. Since the protestors were mostly Russian Armenians, the elections reflected the wishes of the Ottoman Armenians. In addition to the issues about the protest, the character and past of the final candidates would be items of debate.

From a hereditary noble family, Surenian started his education in Tiflis *gimnaziia* but his illness forced him to opt for a monastic life. Afterward, he worked in various parts of the Caucasus as a clergyman.⁵⁵⁸ Most notably he was the head of the Tiflis eparchy between 1894 and 1904.⁵⁵⁹ When Khrimian, the former Catholicos, died, he was the deputy to the Catholicos and the chairman of the Echmiadzin Synod.⁵⁶⁰ However, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had reservations about the stance of Surenian during the conflict between the Armenian Church and the Russian government between 1903 and 1907. Several reports indicated that Surenian took part in the opposition movement against the Tsarist decision to confiscate church properties. More strikingly, Surenian did not offer his condolences to Prince Golitsyn after the failed assassination attempt by the Hnchaks.⁵⁶¹ Surenian was also depicted in the Tsarist reports as ‘weak-willed and easily

⁵⁵⁵ RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 18, ob; Werth, ‘Glava tserkvi, poddannyi imperatora,’ 134.

⁵⁵⁶ RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, l. 18.

⁵⁵⁷ Telegram from Echmiadzin To DDDII, 13 December 1911 [26 December 1911], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, l. 3; The director of the Department of Police to N.I. Pavlov, 31 December 1911 [13 January 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, l. 33; Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 173.

⁵⁵⁸ RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 19-19 ob.

⁵⁵⁹ Garibdzhanian, 23.

⁵⁶⁰ RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 19 ob-20.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., l. 20.

impressionable.⁵⁶² In conjunction with these reservations, it was claimed in the right-wing newspaper *Russkoe znamia* that Surenian was affiliated with the Armenian revolutionary movement, especially the Dashnaks.⁵⁶³

Durian was not approved by St. Petersburg as well. According to the reports, when he was the Patriarch in Istanbul, he was believed to be supported by the Dashnaks, who were still supporting him.⁵⁶⁴ He was reported to be a 'protégé and adherent of the Dashnaktsutun.'⁵⁶⁵ Moreover, Durian's close relations with the Ottoman government did not please Makarov, who believed that the elections had to be held again. The Ministry of Internal Affairs firmly believed in the annulment of the elections because of the incident in which the delegates walked out of the elections. If Surenian or Durian became the Catholicos, that would hamper the aims of the government and lead to 'the strengthening of the predominance of the separatist lay elements of the Armenian nation under the church hierarchy.'⁵⁶⁶

Nevertheless, if the elections were not ratified, it was far from certain that the new elections would produce a desirable result for the government. Ormanian, who was favoured by Makarov, still did not have the backing of the Ottoman Armenians, without which an election victory was impossible. Procurator Melik-Ohandzhanian supported this view as he emphasized that Ormanian, as the former Patriarch of Istanbul was opposed mainly by the Ottoman Armenians, which gave clues about his 'heartless personality' and lack of action against the horrors his flock endured.⁵⁶⁷

However, for Vorontsov-Dashkov, the annulment of the elections could harm improving relations between the Armenians and the Russian administration for which he worked so hard. As a reply to Makarov, he argued that if the elections were not ratified, Ottoman Armenians could easily protest the new elections and not recognize its legitimacy. This move could also hurt the religious feelings of the Armenians in general. As he pointed

⁵⁶² Makarov to Sazanov, 12 January 1912 [25 January 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 39, ob.; Ibid, ll. 20 ob-21.

⁵⁶³ Tunian, *Echmiadzinskii prestol*, 174-5.

⁵⁶⁴ Diakin, 766.

⁵⁶⁵ RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 20 ob-21.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., ll. 22-22 ob.

⁵⁶⁷ The procurator of the Echmiadzin Synod to DDDII, December 1911, RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 25-28.

out in the Council of Ministers' meeting in August 1908, such a policy could lead Armenians to look for a new seat outside of the Russian Empire, which was harmful for Russian interests.⁵⁶⁸ Moreover, Vorontsov-Dashkov also believed that a possible annulment would be a very 'dangerous precedent' for future elections as any discontented group would walk away to interrupt the elections.⁵⁶⁹ Finally, the viceroy asked Makarov to present the case to the Council of Ministers if he had further reservations.⁵⁷⁰ The viceroy also wrote to Kokovtsov arguing that the annulment of the elections would result in the election of some Ottoman Armenian (such as Khrimian and Izmirlian) unknown to the Russian authorities—unlike Surenian, who was born and raised in the Russian Empire and had been on good terms with the viceroyalty.⁵⁷¹

As happened earlier, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs intervened in this delicate matter. When Makarov continued to insist on his position concerning the illegitimacy of the elections and characters of the candidates, and even branded Surenian as 'anti-Russian', Sazonov was supporting the viceroy's position. He soon asked for the opinion of his ambassador at Istanbul, Charykov.⁵⁷² Charykov's first recommendation was not to recognize the elections because most of those who walked away were high-ranking Armenian clergymen without whose support Surenian would be in a difficult situation after taking the post.⁵⁷³ Later, however, the ambassador had a change of heart, mainly owing to the attitude of the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul, Arsharuni, who wrote to Charykov that the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul was for the ratification of the elections. More importantly, Arsharuni noted that as a born and raised Russian subject, Surenian knew the situation of the Church in the Russian Empire very well. He was fully confident that Surenian would fit the bill and asked the Russian authorities to ratify the elections.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁶⁸ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Makarov, 30 December 1911 [12 January 1912], SSSA, f. 13, o. 11, d. 103, ll. 6-7.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, ll. 8-9.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, ll. 6-7.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, ll. 8-9.

⁵⁷² Makarov to Sazanov, 12 January 1912 [25 January 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 37-40.

⁵⁷³ Charykov's memorandum, in Diakin, 768-9.

⁵⁷⁴ Charykov to Sazonov, 2 January 1912 [15 January 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, l. 44.

Another dimension of this decision regarded its impact on the attitude of Ottoman Armenians toward Russia. For the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul, the ratification of the elections would be an indication of how deeply the Tsar cared about the Ottoman Armenians along with Russian Armenians.⁵⁷⁵ Pointing out the favourable depiction of the conditions of the Russian Armenians in the Ottoman Armenian press at the time, Charykov wrote that ‘these mentioned articles were the new symptoms of the turn to a rapprochement with Russia which was taking place among the Turkish Armenians.’⁵⁷⁶

Contrary to Sazonov and the viceroy, who considered the elections ‘legal and favourable for the interests of the government’, Makarov still argued that from a strictly legal standpoint, the elections were illegal and he did not believe that the results were favourable for Russian interests. As previously, Makarov’s disapproval was about the top two candidates’ suitability for the post and the Ottoman Armenian dominance of the elections by which the wishes of the Russian Armenians (most of whom walked out anyway—21 out of 26 Russian Armenian delegates abstained) would be ignored.⁵⁷⁷ As did his predecessor, Makarov advocated that domestic priorities should come first.

Charykov again warned about the harmful implications of the annulment of the elections on the Ottoman Armenians and the Russian interests. In fact, annulment of the elections would be interpreted by the Ottoman Armenians as ‘formal chicanery’ by the Russian authorities to elect Ormanian as the Catholicos, who was ‘unconditionally unacceptable for the Turkish Armenians.’⁵⁷⁸ According to Charykov, considering the critical situation of the internal situation of the Ottoman Empire and its thorny relations with Persia, the sympathies and confidence of the Ottoman Armenians were essential for Russia in early 1912. He agreed with the conclusion reached by Vorontsov-Dashkov arguing that the annulment of the elections would lead to more anti-Russian propaganda.⁵⁷⁹

By February 1912, Sazonov wanted to end this discussion by writing a detailed report for Makarov, considering all the information he had. Supporting the viceroy’s view, Sazonov

⁵⁷⁵ Secret dispatch of Charykov to Sazonov, 9 January 1912 [22 January 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 355, l. 127.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Makarov to Sazonov, 12 January 1912 [25 January 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 38-39 ob.

⁵⁷⁸ Secret telegram of Charykov, 20 January 1912 [2 February 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, l. 122.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid.

disagreed with Makarov's claim about the legitimacy of the elections because the protest of a group of delegates would not be a sufficient basis for the annulment of the elections. Regarding the strategic aspect of the elections, in agreement with Charykov, the foreign policy aspect of this issue was the most important priority for Sazonov as Armenians' growing sympathies for Russia were vital for the empire's position in the Ottoman and Persian empires. A possible annulment of the election of Surenian, the choice of most Russophile moderates among the Armenian delegates, would easily damage the Armenian sympathies. Sazonov also believed that Surenian would be good enough for the post (much better than Dashnak's candidate Durian) and even his much criticized 'weak-willed character' could be used for the interests of the empire if manipulated properly. His participation in the anti-government protests after the confiscation of 1903 was also not considered a serious problem as during this period almost all Armenian political or religious leaders took part in these protests.⁵⁸⁰

In the end, as had happened in 1908, the views of the viceroy and Sazonov prevailed and Surenian was approved by Nicholas II as the next Catholicos in March 1912.⁵⁸¹ By early 1912, Russian foreign policy imperatives regarding the fate of the Ottoman Empire were much more influential than they were four years earlier, when the main priority under Stolypin was the internal reorganization. Vorontsov-Dashkov and Sazonov knew that the domestic and foreign policy aspects were interconnected and a simple erroneous policy could easily damage the upward trend in the relations between Russia and the Armenians. Makarov, much less influential than his predecessor, failed to change the outcome as Surenian was making his preparations in Echmiadzin to set off to St. Petersburg for his consecration.

⁵⁸⁰ Sazonov to Makarov, 31 January 1912 [13 February 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 120-121 ob.

⁵⁸¹ Report of the Minister of Internal Affairs on the confirmation of Archbishop Surenian as the Catholicos, 13 March 1912 [26 March 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, ll. 153-4.

Conclusion

On 16 June 1912, at the Nikolaevskii train station, several members of the Armenian community of St. Petersburg were expecting their newly elected Catholicos.⁵⁸² As had happened with the former Catholicos Izmirlian, Surenian was expected to appear in the presence of the Tsar to be formally consecrated. A few days later, Surenian was received by the Tsar who stated in the consecration ceremony that he expected that the Catholicos and his church would work for the benefit of Russia.⁵⁸³ As part of the ceremony, the Tsar awarded Surenian (now Kevork V) the diamond crest on the capuche as the symbol of his ecclesiastical title, the special rescript, and the imperial edict.⁵⁸⁴ Following the ceremony, the new Catholicos made several statements to the Russian press about the loyalty of Armenians to Russia and how Russia could help the Ottoman Armenians.

By 1912, the Armenian Church began to play the role of intermediary for the Russian interests regarding the Ottoman Armenians. The head of the church, Kevork V, was arguably the most regime-friendly catholicos in the last three decades as the Armenian Church began to be a facilitator for Russian policies—as opposed to the problems it created under the late Khrimian. Furthermore, the influence of the Dashnaktsutun on the Armenian Church was seriously curtailed. How did this transition happen? The starting point was the arrival of Vorontsov-Dashkov, who immediately saw an ally in the Armenian Church in the midst of the chaos in the South Caucasus. Accordingly, one of his first recommendations was the annulment of the confiscation decree of 1903, which he considered a disastrous decision.

Vorontsov-Dashkov was aware of the influence of the Dashnaktsutun in the region, which extended to the Armenian clergy. However, a direct attempt on the church or the Catholicos would only make things worse. As soon as the region was pacified and authorities took the necessary measures to stop the activities of the Dashnaks, the Armenian Church would not pose any real problem. The recently adopted socialist

⁵⁸² RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, l. 173.

⁵⁸³ Nicholas II to Catholicos Surenian, 4 June 1912 [17 June 1912], RGIA, f. 821, o. 7, d. 371, l. 209.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid.

programme of the party in 1907 would also push the Armenian clergy toward the Russian administration since it was quite hostile to the Armenian Church. Therefore, given enough time, the Armenian Church, a key institution to promoting stability in the region, would side with the viceroyalty, as it had traditionally done, to maintain its privileged status.

However, this was not how things were seen from St. Petersburg. Led by Stolypin, many officials considered the privileged status of the Armenian Church as the root of the recent problems. For Stolypin, the Catholicos, adorned with various privileges and elected for life, was using his freedom to the detriment of Russian interests, even to the extent that he was accommodating revolutionaries. From 1907 on, Stolypin tried to convince the viceroy of a full reorganization of the Armenian Church. According to his vision, the Armenian Church needed to be stripped of its privileges and the Catholicos should be a regular head of a Church like other non-Orthodox churches. Moreover, the ideal Catholicos of Stolypin was a Russian subject and a Russian speaker, which for him were the signs of loyalty. To ensure this, the premier also suggested the equalization of the votes of the delegates from abroad (the Ottoman Armenians in particular) and the Russian Armenians at the expense of the Catholicos' ecumenical significance. To sum up, for Stolypin, Catholicos had to be first and foremost a controllable useful agent in domestic affairs while foreign policy concerns could wait.

Stolypin's insistence grew as Khrimian passed away in late 1907 and new elections were on the horizon. Vorontsov-Dashkov opposed all of the proposals Stolypin put forward claiming that these measures would result in discontent among both Russian and Ottoman Armenians, who would interpret them as acts of oppression. Moreover, speaking Russian and being a Russian subject were hardly the essential credentials for a good Catholicos. Thanks to the backing of Izvolskii and others, Vorontsov-Dashkov's views prevailed and it was decided that for more thorough changes, the aftermath of the elections would be a more opportune time.

Nevertheless, the elections of 1908 confirmed the suspicions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The presence of the Dashnaks in the elections and the dominance of the Ottoman Armenian votes, as well as the new Catholicos, who had been close to the

Dashnaktsutun, were vexing Stolypin as he voiced these concerns to the viceroy. By 1909, Stolypin was aware that making major changes concerning the rights and the status of the Armenian Church was a very complicated matter. What he could accomplish so far was to abolish some of the honorary awards for the new Catholicos and the introduction of the new practice for the newly elected Catholicos to arrive in St. Petersburg before his consecration in Echmiadzin and pledge loyalty to the Tsar.

Meanwhile, another grand undertaking in the South Caucasus gave St. Petersburg an opportunity to eliminate the revolutionary elements within the Armenian clergy. This was the Dashnaktsutun trial, by which many Armenian clergymen who were suspected of being affiliated with the party were removed from their posts. Although Vorontsov-Dashkov found this direct action rather excessive, the Dashnaks were losing their organizational capability in the region and the influence on the Armenian Church affairs. There were also some minor changes such as the ban on the political meetings in the Armenian churches, which also aimed at keeping the political influence of the revolutionary parties on religious affairs at bay.

When Izmirlian died in late 1910, Stolypin was hardly satisfied because the status and the rights of the Catholicos, the election procedures, and the educational privileges of the Armenian Church were mostly intact. In the interim, the educational privileges of the Armenian Church became an item of debate. The reports sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs indicated that owing to the autonomous status of the Armenian Church, the schools under its control were promoting Armenian nationalism. To stop this, more supervision and centralization, even at the expense of stripping the church of its educational rights, were needed. Vorontsov-Dashkov again opposed the proposals of St. Petersburg as he argued that there was no need to pursue such risky policies, especially when Russia's relations with its Armenian subjects were improving considerably. The Armenian parish schools, which had already been surpassed by the Russian schools, did not pose any threats and they could be left to the Armenian Church to run, as a mere token of better relations while some changes in the seminaries could be made. Thanks to the support of the Ministry of Education, the viceroy ensured that the Armenian Church

could keep its right to administer parish schools as the only non-Orthodox Church by 1911.

The elections of 1911 were the final manifestation of the differences between St. Petersburg and Tiflis about the governance of the Armenian Church, even after the assassination of Stolypin. This time it was triggered by the protest of some of the delegates who were upset by the exclusion of their favourite candidate from the elections. Makarov's efforts to annul the election results were countered by Vorontsov-Dashkov and Sazonov, who knew that such a decision would risk damaging Russia's relations with Russian and Ottoman Armenians. It was particularly Sazonov, who pressed for the ratification of the election results since the Ottoman Armenians had become very critical for Russian foreign policy interests by early 1912. Despite the pressure from St. Petersburg from 1907 on, the prudent approach of the viceroy regarding the Armenian Church, always a key ally of the Tsarist administration in the Caucasus for him, was producing results. Under the new Catholicos, Kevork V, the Armenian Church would once again become a useful ally for Russia both at home and abroad as Russia became more involved with the fate of the Ottoman Armenians in the years to come.

CHAPTER 4

THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE VICEROYALTY AND THE ARMENIAN BOURGEOISIE (1907–1912)

The National Question in the Russian Empire by 1907

‘The fate of the Georgian language interests a Georgian, no matter where he lives. It would be a sign of profound ignorance to say that Georgian culture concerns only the Georgians who live in Georgia. Take, for instance, the Armenian Church. Armenians of various localities and states take part in the administration of its affairs. Territory plays no part here...Hence, the administration and control of all affairs of national culture must be left to the nations concerned. We proclaim in favour of cultural-national autonomy for the Caucasian nationalities.’⁵⁸⁵ The author of these serious lines on the theoretical aspects of the national question was surprisingly Stalin. Along with Shaumian, he was considered one of the experts on the subject by Lenin. Among the Mensheviks, the Georgian members, such as Filip Makharadze and Nikolai Chkheidze, often played a key role in the party’s position on the national question. There was a reason why the Caucasus produced so many experts on the national question. The region was full of a gamut of nationalities harbouring animosities against each other for a variety of reasons.

The importance of the national question had been felt already during the revolution of 1905, when the peripheries of the empire displayed their discontent with the regime. Apart from the Caucasus, the Poles, Ukrainians, Finns, and Jews were up in arms against the Tsarist regime, which also had a difficult time quelling the disturbances in the

⁵⁸⁵ Joseph V. Stalin, ‘Marxism and the National Question,’ *Prosveshcheniye*, nos. 3-5, transcr., Carl Kavanagh (March-May 1913). This was Stalin’s first serious piece of intellectual work, which he wrote upon the encouragement of Lenin. It was signed under the pseudonym K. Stalin, for the first time. It was no coincidence that Stalin was chosen as the Commissar for Nationality Affairs after the October revolution.

capital.⁵⁸⁶ Although the start of the constitutional era with the promises of the October Manifesto and the inauguration of the Tsarist Duma was hopeful, soon these hopes faded. The deputies of the national parties such as Hromada, Kolo, and the Bund—and later the Dashnaks—sat in the Tauride Palace to express their national aspirations; however, they soon realized that the First and Second Dumas would not produce the result they wanted. Their speeches were met with indifference and at times contempt. What was worse for them was that this trend was reflected by the Stolypin led government as well as the rightist parties.⁵⁸⁷

In the socialist circles of Europe, however, the debates about the national question went on. While some, like the Bund, believed in the need for highly complex schemes of extra-territorial cultural autonomy, for others socialism and democracy would automatically solve the problems of nationalities.⁵⁸⁸ For Lenin, the issue of nationalities had a practical use for the struggle against Tsarism. In a tactical move, he supported the idea of national self-determination, ‘never forgetting that such support [to national movements] was conditional and temporary in order to crush the common enemy.’⁵⁸⁹ However, the influence of the socialist parties in Russian political life was increasingly reduced as Stolypin consolidated his power.

Speaking after the dissolution of the Second Duma, the premier made it clear how his policy regarding the nationalities would be formulated. ‘The imperial Duma, which was established for the greater stability of the Russian state, must also be Russian in spirit. The other peoples which belong to our Empire shall have representatives for their needs in the Imperial Duma, but they shall and will not appear in such numbers as to enable them to tip the scales on purely Russian matters.’⁵⁹⁰ Among the nationalist segments of

⁵⁸⁶ Kappeler, 330.

⁵⁸⁷ For the case of the nationalist party, for instance, see Robert Edelman, *Gentry Politics on the Eve of the Russian Revolution: The Nationalist Party, 1907-1917* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1980).

⁵⁸⁸ This idea was put forward by the Austro-Marxists in 1899. Contrary to the tenets of Orthodox Marxism, they argued that the nations were permanent and not necessarily detrimental to the socialist cause. They argued that nations, especially those with scattered populations and hence lacked the legitimacy for a territorial autonomy, should enjoy their national rights irrespective of their area of residence. By guaranteeing nations such rights, unnecessary national independence movements within a future socialist framework would be averted. Jeremy Smith, *The Bolsheviks and the National Question, 1917-1923* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 11; Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 24-26.

⁵⁸⁹ Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 35-6.

⁵⁹⁰ Cited in Kappeler, 343.

the Russian bureaucracy, there was also a widespread conviction that the revolutionary outburst was the work of non-Russians, which played a part in these new arrangements.⁵⁹¹

Indeed, the premier did what he promised. The non-Russian subjects of the empire, comprising more than half of the population, were represented only by half of that ratio in the Third Duma.⁵⁹² According to the new arrangement, the South Caucasus, mainly owing to its record for revolutionary activity and a heavily non-Russian population, could only have seven deputies, one of whom had to be a Russian.⁵⁹³ The reduced representation of the nationalities and the absence of major socialist parties like the SRs resulted in the rising influence of parties such as the Octobrists and the Unionists, whose dislike of the national aspirations of non-Russian subjects was well known. Speeches in the State Duma like that of Purishkevich on the separatist tendencies of the non-Russian peoples of the empire, including the nationalities in the Caucasus became more commonplace. Purishkevich went as far as arguing that these nationalities in the Caucasus in general and Armenians in particular would aspire to separatism no matter what was done by the Tsarist government.⁵⁹⁴

A practical man, Stolypin knew that this was a delicate question so he refrained from going to such extremes and instead he effectively tried to ignore the national question in the borderlands of the empire. In doing this, what he often did was to highlight the importance of Russian political and cultural primacy rather than openly attack the national minorities like Plehve did.⁵⁹⁵ Particularly in places like Poland or Finland, where the interests of the conservative Russian elements (his support base) were vested, the government generally supported the Russian element against the non-Russians.⁵⁹⁶

Instead, Stolypin focused on the economic and social problems of the empire by undertaking two grand schemes, agrarian reform and the reinstitution of *zemstvos* in key

⁵⁹¹ Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, 'Russian Nationalism and Tsarist Nationalities Policies in Semi-Constitutional Russia, 1905-14,' in *New Perspectives in Modern Russian History*, ed. Robert B. McKean (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 254.

⁵⁹² Kappeler, 343.

⁵⁹³ Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Authority Restored*, 354; idem., *P.A. Stolypin*, 204.

⁵⁹⁴ Ismail-Zade, *I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: administrator, reformator*, 114-116.

⁵⁹⁵ Ascher, *P.A. Stolypin*, 302; Conroy, 112.

⁵⁹⁶ Waldron, 167.

areas, which would also address the real needs of the people and gain their loyalty. In addition, another attempt was made to encourage Russian settlement in the fringes of the empire sparsely populated by the Russians. However, this was a very demanding task and would only be accomplished in the long term. One of the areas in which it failed miserably was the South Caucasus, where the meagre Russian population was noted as a negative factor in the assessment of the viceroy.⁵⁹⁷

These solutions were met with bitter criticism from the Russian political parties, especially the national and socialist parties. Most of them demanded autonomy of various kinds within a federal structure. Parties such as the Kadets and SRs did not aim at federalism; their solution of full-scale democracy was also detrimental to the authority of the Tsar. Like its predecessors, Stolypin's administration did not have a uniform policy on the nationalities and thus circumstantial policies regarding the national question were preferred. The strategy varied from region to region depending on the danger a national question posed to the imperial interests.⁵⁹⁸

The Conflict between St. Petersburg and Tiflis on the National Question

From the day of his appointment to the post of viceroy, Vorontsov-Dashkov was disliked by some circles in St. Petersburg. His wide executive powers, age, and liberal views were the main reasons for this and it grew as the conflicts between the nationalities and general disorder in the region continued. His general approach to the disturbances was considered lenient as his critics began to voice their dissatisfaction more often in the capital. By 1907, the region was stabilizing but there was still some friction between St. Petersburg and Tiflis. In reply to his critics, Vorontsov-Dashkov reported to the Tsar that there was no serious separatist movement in the Caucasus as of 1907. The major exceptions to this

⁵⁹⁷ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim Kraem*, 77-86.

⁵⁹⁸ Rogger, 182-3; Kappeler, 347.

were the Dashnaks, who were ‘dreaming of the establishment of an Armenian republic, tied to the Russia on federative grounds,’ and the Georgian Socialist-Federalists, who envisioned a Georgian republic but the influence of these was limited.⁵⁹⁹

Stolypin did not share the viceroy’s optimism, especially on the Armenians as his stance on the Armenian Church and the Dashnaktsutiun demonstrated. Agreeing with his minister, the director of the police pointed out that the Ottoman Armenian immigrants who arrived in the region in the last decades still posed a danger to the security of the region. From these landless and economically deprived people, many joined the ranks of Armenian revolutionary parties, who fought not only against the Muslims but also against Russians for the dream of ‘a great and independent Armenia.’⁶⁰⁰

The viceroy got more confident as the recovery in the region took place. Dismissing the criticisms from the right, the viceroy believed that ‘the Caucasus was ‘*terra incognita*’ for St. Petersburg’ and what the central government and the public knew about the region was limited to the articles written by the likes of Menshikov.⁶⁰¹ Opposing the labelling of entire nations as ‘revolutionary’ or ‘separatists’, the viceroy thought that once the revolutionary elements were eliminated and economic stability took hold, the nationalities of the South Caucasus would be content if their national demands were met to a certain extent. Therefore, he allowed the teaching of local languages in the first classes and did not meddle too much in the local press.

He knew how outright oppressive policies regarding the nationalities had resulted under his predecessor and why it did not work. As Baron Rosen stated, what the previous intolerant policies achieved was to unite the nationalities of the South Caucasus in their common hatred of the Russian rule.⁶⁰² Vorontsov-Dashkov knew that a balanced approach was necessary for the interests of the Russian rule considering the different characteristics and the aspirations of the national movements of the Georgians, Azeris,

⁵⁹⁹ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim Kraem*, 21.

⁶⁰⁰ ‘Borba s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem na Kavkaze,’ *KA* 35 (1929): 145.

⁶⁰¹ Vorontsov-Dashkov to B.V. Frederiks, 23 April 1908 [6 May 1908], in Diakin, 497.

⁶⁰² Baron Roman R. Rosen, *Forty Years of Diplomacy*, vol. 2 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922), 141.

and the Armenians. The evolution of the relations between these groups and the viceroyalty took different paths between 1907 and 1912.

The Viceroyalty and the Georgians (1907–1912)

The Georgian National Movement and the Russian Administration by 1907

As part of the nationalities question in the South Caucasus, the Georgian case proved to be a problem for the Tsarist regime in the post-1905 era. Despite being predominantly a feudal society, the Georgians had supported the Menshevik movement en masse against the Tsarist establishment.⁶⁰³ Georgians mainly inhabited the provinces of Tiflis, Kutaisi, and Batumi oblast, where ‘the largely mono-ethnic character of the [Georgian] workforce’ found itself facing the strong Armenian bourgeoisie and Russian administration that were seen as the main cause of their grievances.⁶⁰⁴

Under such economic and social circumstances, embracing all the strata within the Georgian society, Menshevism had a strong appeal on the Georgian national movement. Its focus on the importance of labouring classes, to which most Georgians belonged, and its internationalist approach appealed to their national grievances against the Armenian bourgeoisie and Russian administration.⁶⁰⁵ The Georgian support for internationalism within Menshevism was also related to the amalgamation of the Georgian Church into the

⁶⁰³ Georgians did not form their own national party but decided to join RSDWP. An exception was Sakartvelo party, which was similar to SR party in its orientation. However, it failed to attract mass Georgian following.

⁶⁰⁴ Stephen F. Jones, ‘Georgian Social Democracy in 1917,’ in *Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917*, ed. Edith R. Frankel (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 248-50.

⁶⁰⁵ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 16; Jones, ‘Georgian Social Democracy in 1917,’ 248-50; Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 131-2; Suny, ‘Tiflis,’ 274; idem., *Making of the Georgian Nation*, 181; Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia, 1917-1921* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 13-4; Geoffrey A. Hosking, *Russia, People and Empire 1552-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997), 385; Figs, 71.

Russian Orthodox Church, which curbed its national character and political significance.⁶⁰⁶

The anti-Armenian element in the Georgian national movement continued to exist after the revolution of 1905.⁶⁰⁷ The Georgian Mensheviks could easily benefit from their depiction of the Armenians as bourgeoisie exploiting the Georgian labourers. A Dashnak, Pasdermadjian noticed this as he pointed out that ‘in the eyes of Georgian socialists, every Armenian was a bourgeois and every Georgian is a member of proletariat.’⁶⁰⁸ Apart from the animosity held by the labourers and the peasants, the déclassé Georgian nobility still had to witness the primacy of the Armenian industrial and commercial classes, who were buying their properties in their traditional capital Tiflis.⁶⁰⁹

Nevertheless, as Riga and Lang argue, it was the anti-Russian aspect of the Georgian national movement that was more dominant than the anti-Armenian rhetoric.⁶¹⁰ It was the Russian imperial policies that had brought about the current difficulties the déclassé Georgian nobility, professionals, and proletariat were facing against the Armenian bourgeoisie.⁶¹¹ In addition, the Russian government was the biggest landowner in the regions where the Georgians lived, therefore giving both rural and urban Georgians the motivations to antagonize the Russian administration.⁶¹²

Led by Noe Zhordania, the Georgian Mensheviks had a considerable significance among Russian Mensheviks, even influencing them, especially their stance on the peasantry.⁶¹³ A former student at the theology seminary in Tiflis, Zhordania had been in Western Europe, where he maintained contacts with the leading European socialists such as

⁶⁰⁶ Vladas Stankevich, *Sudby narodov Rossii* (Berlin: Izdatelstvo I.P. Ladyzhnikova, 1921), 222.

⁶⁰⁷ The anti-Armenian sentiment among the Georgian national movement was also raised by Stalin. He argued that particularly in the cities where the Armenian bourgeoisie was doing better than its Georgian counterparts, the ‘anti-Armenian nationalism’ fuelled the Georgian movement and reducing the extent of anti-Russian sentiment. Stalin, ‘Marxism and the National Question,’.

⁶⁰⁸ Pasdermadjian, *Bank Ottoman*, 163.

⁶⁰⁹ Suny, ‘Tiflis Crucible,’ 273.

⁶¹⁰ Liliana Riga, *The Bolsheviks and the Russian Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), 196; Lang, 132.

⁶¹¹ Riga, 196.

⁶¹² Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 132.

⁶¹³ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 235.

Plekhanov, Kautsky, and Parvus.⁶¹⁴ Under his leadership, the Georgian SD deputies were adding the woes of Stolypin in St. Petersburg and Vorontsov-Dashkov in Tiflis.

When the Second Duma was disbanded, a handful of Georgian deputies found themselves in Siberia along with other SDs. The deaths of Japaridze and Lomtadze in Siberian prisons as well as the arrest of poet Akaki Tsereteli for satirising the governor created much resentment among the Georgians.⁶¹⁵ In the post-revolutionary period, the main aim of the Georgian SDs was cultural and regional autonomy for Georgians in a socialist framework.⁶¹⁶ As Jones argues, ‘internationalism and egalitarianism of Marxism was a better guarantee for Georgian national aspirations than outright independence.’⁶¹⁷

Vorontsov-Dashkov thought that there were both revolutionary and economic dimensions to the problems that the Caucasian administration had experienced in the revolutionary period. The efforts of the Georgian revolutionaries caused the Caucasian administration to react with force, which in turn, resulted in more repression, particularly in the Guria region and unsatisfactory relations with the Georgian population. The economic factor was also at work since the predominantly peasant Georgian population was suffering from poor economic prospects, which contributed to their antagonism to the authorities.⁶¹⁸ The viceroy also noted the negative results of cultural restrictions on the use of Georgian, which only created hostility among the Georgians against the Tsarist regime.⁶¹⁹

The Georgian Clergy’s Demands for the Restoration of the Georgian Autocephaly

In this period, when attempts were made to put the Armenian Church under firmer Tsarist control, the Georgian Church also emerged as a new centre of opposition against the

⁶¹⁴ Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 123-29.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid., 175-8.

⁶¹⁶ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 43; Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 18.

⁶¹⁷ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 43.

⁶¹⁸ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim Kraem*, 30.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid, 107-8.

Tsarist regime. Having lost its status of autocephaly in 1811, the Georgian Church was later absorbed into the Russian Orthodox Church. To administer its affairs, the Exarchate of Georgia was established.⁶²⁰ The demand for the restoration of the autocephaly and the former properties of the Georgian Church appeared in 1905–1906 within the broader context of Georgian opposition to the Tsarist regime. As Werth points out, during the revolution of 1905, various national entities under the Orthodox Church voiced some demands about language etc., but the Georgian case was calling for ‘full ecclesiastical independence.’⁶²¹

These demands of the Georgian clergy created resentment among the Tsarist bureaucracy and were met with more repression.⁶²² Although Vorontsov-Dashkov reported to the Tsar that the Georgian clergy began to attach less importance to the issue of autocephaly and were ready for concessions by 1907, his assessment turned out to be too optimistic.⁶²³ The demands went on and as had happened with the Armenian clergy near 1903, the Georgian clergy, who were supporting the restoration of the autocephaly, were now being blamed for developing links with SDs and separatism.⁶²⁴ The autocephaly movement, supported by the people and the majority of the clergy, was seen as revolutionary movement ‘dreaming of an independent Georgia from the Caspian to the Black Sea.’⁶²⁵

In 1906, the leading clergymen of the autocephalist movement, most notably Bishop Kyrion, had appealed to the Holy Synod for the restoration of autocephaly but to no avail.⁶²⁶ Instead, a new Exarch of Georgia, Nikon, who opposed the autocephalist movement, arrived in Tiflis in 1906. Two years later, in May 1908, Nikon was murdered in Tiflis, which enabled the Russian government to put more pressure on the suspected autocephalists. Soon, Kyrion was dismissed by the orders of the Tsar and was exiled to Sangskar desert and the Holy Synod at St. Petersburg was preparing to take certain

⁶²⁰ David M. Lang, ‘Russian Impact on Georgia,’ in *Russia and Asia: Essays on the Influence of Russia on the Asian Peoples*, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 221.

⁶²¹ Paul W. Werth, ‘Georgian Autocephaly and the Ethnic Fragmentation of Orthodoxy,’ *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 23 (2006): 76.

⁶²² Lang, ‘Russian Impact on Georgia,’ 227.

⁶²³ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska po upravleniiu Kavkazskim Kraem*, 23.

⁶²⁴ Werth, ‘Georgian Autocephaly,’ 90.

⁶²⁵ Essay on the autocephalist movement of the Georgian Church, in Diakin, *Natsionalnyi vopros*, 658-9.

⁶²⁶ Werth, 88-90; Sergo Vardosanidze, ‘His Holiness and Beatitude, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Kyrion II (1917-1928),’ *Saarkivo moambe* [The Archival Bulletin] 8 (Winter 2010): 7.

measures against the members of this movement.⁶²⁷ The grievances of the autocephalists were soon heard even in the Vatican.⁶²⁸

The autocephalists continued their activities and in November 1910 a new congress of Georgian eparchies convened to discuss what needed to be done to promote the claims of the Georgian Church.⁶²⁹ Apart from the usual demands for autocephaly, the participants discussed the restoration of former Georgian churches and monasteries, which were allegedly appropriated by the Armenian Catholicosate, now on friendly terms with the regime.⁶³⁰ The discontent of the Georgian clergy was also displayed in practical matters. The students in Georgian parochial schools were taught in Russian and Georgian clergymen were not assigned to higher posts of influence. In 1910–1911, the authorities did not allow the publication of the ecclesiastical journal of the Georgian Exarchate in Georgian.⁶³¹

Vorontsov-Dashkov, contrary to his earlier dismissal, found by experience that the issue of ecclesiastical autocephaly for the Georgian national movement was in fact ‘the most crucial question’ so he wanted to ensure that it was not to be used for active political opposition to the government.⁶³² One of the ways to do this without hurting the national feelings of the Georgians was to transform this question into a purely theoretical one that could only be discussed among the high clergy members. Instructed by the viceroy, the Exarch Innokentii succeeded in turning the pleas of autocephaly into a theoretical debate instead of a full-fledged political opposition as happened with the Armenian Church.⁶³³

When the conflict over the confiscation of church properties and privileges of the Armenian Church arose earlier, the viceroy, despite the opposition of Stolypin, had insisted on keeping its privileges and its relatively autonomous status. His basic premise was that the Armenian Church, when obedient, could be used for expanding the Russian

⁶²⁷ Werth, ‘Georgian Autocephaly,’ 74; Vardosanidze, 7-8; Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 177-78.

⁶²⁸ Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 177-78.

⁶²⁹ Subjects under review in the eparchial conference of the clergy of the Georgian eparchy in December 1910, 16 November 1910 [29 November 1910], doc. no. 8, in Vakhtang Guruli, ‘Documents Important for the History of the Georgian Church,’ *Saarkivo moambe* 8 (Winter 2010): 137-40.

⁶³⁰ Ibid. This friction between the Armenian Church and the Georgian Church continues even today.

⁶³¹ Diakin, 675-76.

⁶³² Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 8.

⁶³³ Ibid.

influence on Russian and Ottoman Armenians. This was not the case for the Georgians and their church, as the only significant Georgian population resided in the Russian Empire. More importantly, unlike the Armenian Church, the Georgian Church was absorbed into the Russian Orthodox Church after the Russian conquest.

As part of the Russian Orthodox Church, asking ecclesiastical autonomy was unthinkable given the number of non-Russians incorporated in the Russian Orthodox Church and its importance for St. Petersburg. Thus, the conflict with the Armenian Church could be sorted out relatively easily since there were grounds for collaboration. In the Georgian case, the calls for ecclesiastical autonomy or restoration of the properties of the Georgian Church were interpreted by Tsarist authorities as a complementary sign of national political autonomy demands, which were voiced already by the Georgian national movement.

The Georgian National Movement and the Viceroyalty (1909–1912)

In the post-revolutionary period, the poor situation of the Georgian countryside provided more recruits to the Georgian opposition to the regime. In addition, the redemption payments were still intact, making anti-Tsarist agitation very feasible. In the cities, the Georgians also found that the majority of the industrialists and merchants were Russian, European, or Armenian. Their traditional capital, Tiflis, was full of Armenian trading companies, whereas the mining complexes at Alaverdi, a key copper source for the empire, were run by the French and the Batumi oil works, which were taken over from Rothschild's by Deterding's Royal Dutch.⁶³⁴ Hence, Georgian Menshevism, despite losing its organizational efficacy in the region because of the measures taken by the

⁶³⁴ Suny, 'Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule,' 124-5; Tolf, 189.

viceroyalty, still had the support of the Georgian masses whose national struggle also had a class dimension.⁶³⁵

As with other revolutionary organizations, the Georgian SDs were also under severe pressure from the Tsarist police. In 1909, Zhordania was busy with his trial while Ramishvili took an administrative exile to Astrakhan. Other prominent Georgian political leaders were arrested.⁶³⁶ Meanwhile, the Georgian representation in third Duma was dominated by SDs like Nikolai Chkheidze, who was the main spokesman of the SD faction.⁶³⁷ The Georgian influence on the Mensheviks was still considerable. For instance, when Georgian SDs, along with the Bund, led the demand for inclusion of national-cultural autonomy to the official party policy in 1912, the Menshevik congress in Vienna had to approve it.⁶³⁸ Hence, the Georgian national movement was considered by the Tsarist bureaucracy as an integral part of the broader Russian socialist movement. From 1907 to 1912, the policies of the viceroyalty and the central government could not distort the mass support for the Georgian SDs.

The viceroy had to accept that 'the socialist propaganda' succeeded among the Georgians mainly because of structural reasons. The chronic agrarian problems caused by the relationship between the Georgian peasantry and the landowning classes still persisted, which contributed to this success.⁶³⁹ Acknowledging the sources of the economic and social dimensions of the Georgian discontent, the viceroy believed that the extension of *zemstvos* and the agrarian reform project into the region would help gain Georgian loyalties. Although his initiative regarding the *zemstvos* failed, upon the insistence of the viceroy, the redemption payments were finally abolished in 1912, which was believed to improve the conditions of the peasantry.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁵ Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 12-13; Suny, 'Tiflis,' 274-76,

⁶³⁶ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 219.

⁶³⁷ Lang, *A Modern History of Georgia*, 178.

⁶³⁸ Parsons, 390.

⁶³⁹ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 8.

⁶⁴⁰ In 1905 and 1909, conferences were organized by the viceroyalty about the introduction of *zemstvos* to the Caucasus but they did not produce any results mainly because of the opposition by the Ministry of War and Ministry of Internal Affairs on the grounds that it could complicate the stability of the region. Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 8; Hovannisian, 'Russian Armenia,' 38; Marshall, 47.

Despite all of the success of the SDs in the Georgian national movement, the viceroy was dismissing the allegations of separatism among the Georgians.⁶⁴¹ More importantly, Vorontsov-Dashkov noted that the Georgians, just like the Armenians, were living in the midst of Muslims and for that reason they would eventually side with the Russian administration.⁶⁴² Like his premier, the viceroy believed that the Georgian national movement would soon lose its appeal with the reforms and effective policing.

By 1912, the Georgians posed a curious case in the context of the nationalities question in the South Caucasus. With its déclassé nobility and a huge peasantry, the Georgians demonstrated signs of discontent in all areas ranging from its Church to its active support of Menshevism. The landowning Georgian nobility, the traditional ally of the Tsarist regime, went on witnessing the worsening of its economic fortunes because of the diminishing returns on the land while its Armenian neighbours as well as the Russians and foreigners were dominating commerce and industry. As they were losing their estates to these groups, a score of the sons of failed Georgian nobles, as Social Democrats, continued to lead the Georgian national movement, which mainly saw the Russian administration as the source of their economic and social declining fortunes.

There was a segment of Georgian nobility that remained faithful to the Russian administration and was rewarded with posts in the viceroyalty and the Caucasus corps of the imperial army, but their influence on the Georgians was limited. The mass support was lent to the Georgian SDs, who were leading the national movement primarily against Russian rule. Since they had influenced all segments of the Georgian community, persecution of this movement did not eliminate Georgian dissatisfaction, although it slowed down their activities.

On the other hand, the demands of the Georgian clergy for autocephaly became more pressing as the Georgian national movement got stronger during the revolution of 1905. In contrast to the Armenian Church, the Georgian clergy served under the administration of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Holy Synod would loath the idea of giving autonomies to the national churches—particularly after the regime started to recover from

⁶⁴¹ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 8.

⁶⁴² Ibid.

the impact of the revolutionary unrest. Given the number of nationalities under the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church, this was not feasible.

The Georgians were complaining that they should have ecclesiastical autonomy just like Armenians, Muslims, and Catholics.⁶⁴³ However, the Georgian population was mainly distributed in the South Caucasus and there were no significant Georgian populations in the neighbouring Persian and Ottoman Empires, unlike the other two nationalities, the Armenians and the Azeris. Therefore, their relationship with the Russian authorities had little significance concerning Russian foreign policy. This was clearly not the case with the Armenians and Azeris. It should be noted that the suggestion by Stolypin to restrict the privileges of the Armenian Catholicos and to turn him into an ordinary head of a Church was aborted because of the potential damage it could inflict on the Russian foreign policy interests.

The viceroyalty addressed these sources of discontent among the Georgians toward the Russian administration, most of them structural, by purging the Georgian Church of its nefarious characters, undertaking agricultural and administrative reform projects, and accommodating a certain segment of the Georgian population to the local administration. Vorontsov-Dashkov admitted that the Social Democrat-led Georgian movement was still the leading political power among the Georgians but it had lost organizational power in the region. On top of this, once his reforms improved the economic and political condition of the Georgian nobility and the peasantry, who would then refrain from antagonizing the Tsarist administration, the national movement would be further weakened. Thus, by 1912, the Georgians became a less pressing concern for the Tsarist administration, especially among the growing fears of the Muslim movement.

⁶⁴³ Diakin, 675-76.

The Viceroyalty and the Azeris (1907–1912)

When the revolutionary upsurge began in 1905, the Azeris were arguably the least politically conscious nationality in the South Caucasus. However, after the experience of the revolutionary period, especially the hostilities with the Armenians, this was to change. The bloody clashes made the Azeri intelligentsia and bourgeoisie, centred mainly in Baku, aware of the new situation and the need to act. The first attempt was made with the formation of Himmat in 1904 and Difai in 1905 as a part of the Azeri national movement both against the Armenians and the Tsarist regime. After the end of hostilities in 1906, Difai was integrated to include Himmat. Advocating for the enlightenment of the Muslim masses of the South Caucasus, Himmat focused its energies on action rather than ideological propaganda.⁶⁴⁴ More importantly, despite its use of socialist vocabulary, the zeitgeist of the time, the main enemy for the Himmat party was Russian rule rather than capitalism.⁶⁴⁵ However, under the Stolypin's instructions, Vorontsov-Dashkov was very adamant about eradicating the revolutionary movement in the region and Himmat was soon added to the casualty list. Losing its operational power in 1907, Himmat went underground.

The Tsarist constitutional experiment also influenced the political awareness of the Azeris, who were now in closer contact with the other Muslims of the empire. Particularly more politically aware Crimean and Volga Tatars helped Azeris discuss the important issues of the day such as the need for Muslim modernization in education, commerce, and religion, and increased cooperation among the Muslims of the empire. Soon, the June coup d'état exerted increased pressure on the Muslim movement, which ended with the reduction of their representative powers.

⁶⁴⁴ Swietochowski, 'The Himmat party,' 121; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920*, 57; Mirza Bala Mehmetzade, *Milli Azerbaycan Hareketi* (Berlin: Firka Divanı, 1938), 61.

⁶⁴⁵ Swietochowski, 'The Himmat party,' 120.

The Impact of Persian and Ottoman Constitutional Revolutions on the Azeri National Movement

Although the Azeri national movement was hampered by the recovery of the Tsarist regime, it found two new homes in which to flourish in the following years. The Persian and Ottoman constitutional movements provided the Azeri intelligentsia excellent training grounds. Both movements started mainly against the autocratic rule of the Sultan and the Shah but soon after the proclamation of the constitutional regimes, other demands followed. Most of these demands were related to the long-lasting problems regarding the Muslim challenge to modernity. While some circles believed in the need for outright Westernization, some others believed in the compatibility of Islam with modern values. In the circles in Istanbul and Tabriz, Azeri intellectuals contemplated the ways to transform their societies in the face Tsarist oppression and the stiff competition with the Armenians. Issues such as women's education, spread of primary schools, and language reform were commonplace.

From the start of the constitutional movement in 1906, the Caucasian element played an important role. It was the support from Tiflis and Baku that helped the capitulation of the Persian court and eventually the establishment of a Constituent National Assembly in 1906.⁶⁴⁶ When the civil war broke out in 1908, various Muslim parties, the majority of which were led by Himmat, as well as the Armenian (mainly the Dashnaks) and the Georgian parties stepped in.⁶⁴⁷ The main base of the Persian constitutional movement was Tabriz, where the dominant population was the Azeri Turks. It was the heart of northern Persia, where the Russian interests were heavily vested. Soon, the Russian-trained Persian forces, along with a Cossack brigade defeated the constitutionalist forces. Meanwhile, the viceroy was not happy about the participation of Russian subjects in this conflict as he reported to St. Petersburg.⁶⁴⁸ This sentiment was also shared by the central

⁶⁴⁶ Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 84.

⁶⁴⁷ Swietochowski, 'The Himmat party,' 123; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920*, 68.

⁶⁴⁸ Iago Gocheleishvili, 'Georgian Sources on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution 1905-11: Sergo Gamdlisvili's Memoirs of the Gilan Resistance,' in *Iranian-Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions Since 1800*, ed. Stephanie Cronin (New York: Routledge, 2012), 214.

government.⁶⁴⁹ A complication in the Persian frontier would put the ongoing recovery in the Caucasus at risk. The most serious threat in this regard was the involvement of the Muslim political parties owing to a considerable Azeri population in the bordering regions of Russia and Persia.

On the one hand, what happened across the southern border was circulated in the Baku press and Azeri intellectuals were discussing the events. Some were advocating unity among the Russian and Persian Azeris.⁶⁵⁰ The intelligentsia in Baku was interested in knowing the views of émigré intellectuals in the Persian Empire such as Mehmed Resulzade. A journalist sent to Persia to report about the constitutional movement, Resulzade's activism made him stay there. He founded the influential newspaper *Iran-i Nou* (New Iran) in August 1909, where he expressed his ideas about the future of the Azeris under Russian rule.⁶⁵¹ On the other hand, the Azeri revolutionary groups, which were mostly eliminated in the Russian Empire, found new grounds to survive in a very critical region. As the conflict between the Shah's forces and the constitutionalists persisted, the impact on the Persian constitutional movement on the Azeri national movement remained an important factor. The interest shown in the Persian constitutional movement by the Azeris in the South Caucasus was seen as detrimental to the pacification process in the South Caucasus by the Russian authorities in the Caucasus.

When the Azeri intelligentsia was preoccupied with the struggle of the constitutionalists and the Shah's forces, the news from Istanbul reached the South Caucasus. Thanks to the efforts of the CUP, sultan Abdulhamid II agreed to re-establish the constitutional regime. The committee was already in contact with the Caucasian Muslims and had many members among them.⁶⁵² The constitutional regime was hampered by the counter-revolution in April 1909, but its eventual defeat by the CUP forces signalled the toppling of Abdulhamid II and the reinforcement of the CUP's position in Ottoman politics.

The environment in Istanbul was quite inviting to the Azeri intellectuals, who were under pressure from the Tsarist police. Soon, many of them left for Istanbul, where they

⁶⁴⁹ Swietochowski, 'The Himmat party,' 123; Chaqueri, 162.

⁶⁵⁰ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920*, 68.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 69; idem., 'The Himmat party,' 123.

⁶⁵² Yusuf H. Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, vol. 1, pt. 1 (Ankara: TTK, 1983), 341-2.

participated in the political discussions of the day. One such example was Ahmed Agaoglu. Born into a noble family, Agaoglu studied in St. Petersburg and Paris, where he became familiar with the ideas of progress and enlightenment. After returning to the South Caucasus, he wrote, and held editorial posts, in the influential newspapers in the Caucasus and the European journals. Moreover, as a member of the Baku City Duma, he also took part in the educational modernization efforts among the Azeri population, for which he corresponded with the Ottoman intellectuals.⁶⁵³

When Agaoglu left Baku for Istanbul after the news of the revolution in the Ottoman Empire, he soon became an influential figure in the CUP circles. His letters from Istanbul, reflecting his views on what needed to be done for Muslim modernization, began to appear in *Kaspîi* in 1909.⁶⁵⁴ He was also an important part of the debates about Turkism, which called for better ties with the Turks of the Russian Empire. His writings on cultural and political Turkism gave the Azeri intellectuals in Baku reason to think about what could be done in the South Caucasus while the Tsarist secret police had suspicions of Agaoglu for harbouring pan-Turkist aspirations.⁶⁵⁵

Another important Azeri émigré in Istanbul was Huseyinzade Ali. When Huseyinzade came to Istanbul to study at the medical college, he joined the CUP so his links with the political currents in the Ottoman Empire were well-established. After his return to Baku in 1904, he edited the newspapers, *Hayat* and *Füyuzat* before immigrating to Istanbul. His influential writings on Muslim modernization and political Turkism made a serious imprint in the CUP circles.⁶⁵⁶ In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Azeri intelligentsia had witnessed three different revolutions in the Russian, Persian, and Ottoman empires. The revolutionary parties of the Azeris lost their Russian organizations but found new homes in Ottoman and Persian empires, where they gained valuable political experience. The combined effect of these revolutions was a very lively intellectual environment for political debates centred in Baku to ponder what needed to be done for the advancement of the Azeri population which was lagging behind its

⁶⁵³ A. Holly Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Agaoglu and the New Turkey* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002), 117-8.

⁶⁵⁴ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 68.

⁶⁵⁵ Fahri Sakal, *Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey* (Ankara: TTK, 1999), 16, 72; Shissler, 117-8

⁶⁵⁶ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920*, 56.

neighbours as well as bigger questions about the future of Russian Muslims and the Muslims of the neighbouring empires. The issues of cultural and educational importance such as the modernization of Muslim schooling, spreading literacy, or a more expansive publication of newspapers and journals, were taken up by the Azeri intelligentsia supported mainly by the wealthy Azeri industrialists.

The Azeri Cultural and Educational Revival

When the empires of the East were being shaken by the revolutions, the Azeris began to contemplate what was wrong with their situation and the remedies for it. The most commonly highlighted theme in the writings of Agaoglu or Resulzade was the socioeconomic inferiority of the Azeris and how to sort this out. By 1907, the Azeris were the most populous and the least literate group in the region. Most of them were peasants, and those who worked in the cities (for instance in the Baku oil industry) were predominantly employed as low-skilled workers (54 percent) whereas foreigners, Russians and Armenians, held most of the skilled jobs.⁶⁵⁷ This was what Altstadt terms 'the first native, urban, industrial Muslim proletariat in the world.'⁶⁵⁸ Many of the Azeris were from politically fragile northern Persia in search of even the lowest-paying jobs.⁶⁵⁹

In the local bureaucratic employment patterns, there was a similar picture. Particularly in the city of Baku, the concentration of economic activity attracted increasing numbers of Russian residents to the city who often occupied these posts.⁶⁶⁰ Only in the City Duma, were the Azeris not underrepresented, perhaps as a result of appeasement by the

⁶⁵⁷ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 13-4; Christopher Rice, 'Party Rivalry in the Caucasus: SRs, Armenians and the Baku Union of Oil Workers, 1907-08,' *The Slavonic and East European Review* 67, no. 2 (1989): 229-30.

⁶⁵⁸ Audrey L. Altstadt, 'Muslim Workers and the Labor Movement in pre-war Baku,' in *Turkic Culture, Continuity and Change*, Sabri M. Akural ed. (Bloomington: Turkish Studies, Indiana University, 1987), 83.

⁶⁵⁹ Altstadt, 'Muslim workers,' 85; idem., *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 36.

⁶⁶⁰ Altstadt, 'The Baku City Duma,' 53.

viceroys.⁶⁶¹ Particularly disturbing for the Tsarist officials was the special situation of Baku and the crime rates among the Muslims. Despite some improvement resulting from the efforts of the viceroy between 1909 and 1912, Baku was by far the most problematic city in the region, while the Muslims topped the crime rate statistics (both proportionally and in absolute terms) in most of the regions they inhabited.⁶⁶² Unlike the Armenians and Georgians, they were not recruited for the army, a disappointment for some Azeris and an indication of how they were perceived by the Tsarist bureaucracy.⁶⁶³

A common answer for improving the socioeconomic situation of the Azeri population was schooling. From the millionaire oil tycoons to the SDs, most Azeris were in agreement that they needed to enlarge and modernize their schools. This was actually an important item on the agendas of the Russian Muslims, particularly after the efforts of Ismail Gaspirali and his new method movement. The movement, despite some resistance from the traditionalists and the Russian government, was a great success and helped the modernization and expansion of Muslim schooling in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In the South Caucasus, the new method schools only began to expand after 1905 owing to the difficulties created by the Caucasian administration.⁶⁶⁴ Apart from the Azeri intelligentsia, an important vein of the Azeri educational drive came from the wealthy Azeri industrialists that provided the financial backing. One of these industrialists was Tagizade, who was the wealthiest Azeri oil man and a philanthropist. A man with a very modest background, his success in the oil business made him one of the most influential Muslims in the region. Made an honorary state councillor by Nicholas II, Tagizade channelled all of his energy to Azeri cultural reforms after selling most of his oil fields.⁶⁶⁵

His support for this cause enabled the opening of the schools for girls and children and the establishment of educational charities to spread literacy like *Nesr-i Maarif*, which was

⁶⁶¹ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 62-63.

⁶⁶² The chancellery of the viceroy of the Caucasus, October 1909, RGIA f. 1276, o. 19, d. 334; ll. 114-21; Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za piatiletie upravleniia Kavkazom*, 5.

⁶⁶³ Keykurun, 22; 47.

⁶⁶⁴ Meyer, 'Turkic worlds,' 130.

⁶⁶⁵ Steve LeVine, *The Oil and the Glory: The Pursuit of Empire and Fortune on the Caspian Sea* (New York: Random House, 2007), 8-9.

founded by Tagizade in 1908 and directed by Agaoglu.⁶⁶⁶ In addition to schooling, Tagizade was also a patron of theatres, libraries, and operas run by Azeris, who produced the first Muslim opera libretto in 1907 (*Leyla and Mecnun*) in the region.⁶⁶⁷ Thanks to these efforts, the literacy rates for Azeris significantly increased among males and females between 1897 and 1913.⁶⁶⁸

Another channel was the growing press and Azeri bourgeoisie and intelligentsia teamed up to found newspapers and periodicals. More than 60 periodicals in Azeri Turkish were published between 1907 and 1915, a huge leap forward.⁶⁶⁹ In these periodicals, Azeris discussed how to achieve modernization, begin a cultural revival and catch up to their Armenian neighbours and although some of the most influential Azeri intelligentsia went abroad because of pressure from the Tsarist police, the Azeri press continued to bring the discussions in Istanbul and Tabriz to Baku.

Apart from the press, these demands were voiced in another important public venue, the State Duma. The Azeri deputies, along with the empire-wide Muslim political movement led by the *Ittifak*, had been active in the first and second Duma, where they attempted to make the common demands on behalf of the empire's Muslims. The use of language in state institutions had always been a controversial issue and had taken severe criticism from the right-wing members in the first and second Dumas. To the Muslim demands for instruction in their native language, a deputy from the right would yell 'Go to Turkey!'⁶⁷⁰

Although the number of Muslim deputies in the Third Duma dropped to 10—a huge reduction—they continued to use the parliament as a means to publicize their demands.

⁶⁶⁶ James H. Meyer, 'The Economics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Money, Power And Muslim Communities in Late Imperial Russia,' in *Asiatic Russia, Imperial Power in Regional and International Contexts*, ed. Uyama Tomohiko (Oxford: Routledge, 2012), 263-64.

⁶⁶⁷ Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 33.

⁶⁶⁸ Audrey Altstadt-Mirhadi, 'Baku: Transformation of a Muslim Town,' in *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Michael F. Hamm (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), 297.

⁶⁶⁹ Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay Chantal, *La presse et le Mouvement National chez les Musulmans de Russie avant 1920* (Paris: Mouton & Co, 1964), 133.

⁶⁷⁰ When the deputy for Baku was criticizing the obligatory education in Russian in his speech in the Second Duma, a deputy from the right intervened and asked 'why he spoke so badly if all that they taught was Russian.' Quoted in Wayne Dowler, *Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1860-1917* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's UP, 2001), 199.

Their main concerns were again about linguistic and religious liberties.⁶⁷¹ An Azeri deputy, Hasmamedov, stated in his speech at the Duma that the road to cultural development was closed to Muslims because of the educational system. The existing schools were unsatisfactory for two reasons: the native tongue was not used and the Muslims had fewer schools vis-à-vis the Christians. The Muslim population even lacked a pedagogical institution to train its religious teachers.⁶⁷² With its more right-wing profile, the Third Duma rejected these pleas with utter contempt.

The demands for the expansion of schools and other means to combat illiteracy were themselves not opposed by the Tsarist administration. However, as the schools were established and literacy rates went up and more lively Azeri press was brought about, the Tsarist administration knew that different demands about cultural and educational matters would follow. As expected, soon the demands for education in native languages, more religious liberties, the introduction of self-government methods like *zemstvo*, and more investment in the South Caucasus followed.

The Azeris, as a part of the broader Muslim modernization in the Russian Empire, were adapting to the challenges of the post-revolutionary period. In the first few years of the recovery, the viceroyalty and the central government were busy with eradicating the revolutionary movement and they were not too concerned with the Azeri demands about cultural and educational matters and even supported their campaigns to spread literacy. However, when the revolutionary movement began to wane in the South Caucasus, two other revolutions broke out in the neighbouring Muslim empires. The political debates about Turkism, pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism in the circles in Istanbul and Tabriz were now discussed in the cafés in Baku. From Stolypin to the ordinary Okhrana agent in Baku, the Tsarist bureaucracy's perception of the Muslims in the South Caucasus was gradually changing for the worse.

⁶⁷¹ Nesrin Sarıahmetoğlu, *Azeri-Ermeni İlişkileri 1905-1920* (Ankara: TTK, 2006), 89-90.

⁶⁷² Seyitzade, 62-5.

The Threat of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism in the South Caucasus

An important political movement that influenced the Tsarist decision-making process at home and abroad was related to pan-Islam and pan-Turkism, which began to appear more on the political scene near 1910. From 1905 to 1911, the Muslims of the Russian, Ottoman and Persian Empires experienced a very unique period, where, among other things, they discussed one essential issue: the Muslim challenge to modernity. The Russian Muslims were under the rule of the Romanovs, the Ottoman, and Persian Empires were under severe pressure from the European powers. As a panacea to this decline, apart from modernization, many advocated the need for increased political, economic, and cultural coordination among these Muslims. For some ideologues however, political unity was essential and could only be achieved through pan-Islamism or pan-Turkism.

During his reign, Abdulhamid II had constantly tried to reach out to other Muslims by virtue of his title, the Caliph.⁶⁷³ His pan-Islamist policies were used as leverage against the European powers that had significant numbers of Muslim subjects rather than an aggressive expansionary plan for which the Ottoman Empire did not have the means.⁶⁷⁴ Similar policies of the CUP to improve the solidarity among the Muslims, particularly with those of Russia and Persia, have also been labelled as pan-Turkist since the CUP was highlighting the Turkish identity along with the Muslim identity.⁶⁷⁵ However, the real aim of the CUP's policies has been an item of debate.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷³ Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 40-62.

⁶⁷⁴ Cezmi Eraslan, *II. Abdülhamid ve İslam Birliği: Osmanlı Devleti'nin İslam Siyaseti, 1856-1908* (Istanbul: Otuken, 1992), 28-36; Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), 286.

⁶⁷⁵ The term pan-Turkism was started to be used alongside with pan-Islamism more often after the revolution of 1908. Meyer, 'Turkic worlds,' fn. 95, 126.

⁶⁷⁶ There is a considerable literature on pan-Islam and pan-Turkism, which were until recently accepted as the driving ideology of the CUP from the eve of the First World War to 1918. For pan-Islam and pan-Turkism thesis, see Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (New York: Oxford UP, 1994); Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967); Pasdermadjian, *Histoire de l'Arménie*, 387-89; Ervand K. Sarkisian, *Ekspansionistskaia politika Osmanskoi imperii v Zakavkaze nakanune i v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Erevan: Izdatelstvo AN

For the Russian bureaucracy, the pan-Islamist movement and its doctrine were vague but its ultimate aim was considered to be the political unity of Muslims.⁶⁷⁷ Among the Tsarist bureaucracy and certain political parties from the right, some already had suspicions about the pan-Islamist threat. One source of these suspicions was the situation of the Russian Muslims and their demands. Led by the Volga and Crimean Tatars, the Russian Muslims were asking more political, cultural and religious liberties after the revolution of 1905. Given the considerable Muslim population of the empire, this was a serious matter.

Once the general strength of the revolutionary organizations was broken and the Stolypin-led government became more confident, the central government became more concerned with developments regarding the Russian Muslims. This increased when the CUP began to dominate Ottoman politics after the counter-revolution of 1909, owing to the connections between the CUP and the Russian Muslims. From 1910 on, the combined effect of the internal situation of the Russian Muslims and the external aspect of their ties with the Ottoman Empire began to change the perception of the Russian Muslims as a threat for the Tsarist bureaucracy. This was particularly important for a border region like the South Caucasus, where the Tsarist officials increasingly had a different perception of the Azeris.

These allegations about pan-Islamist sentiments of the Muslims in the Caucasus were not new. In the Caucasus, an Armenian publicist, Chalkhushian, attributed the Muslim efforts of solidarity against the Armenians from 1905–1906 to the pan-Islamist movement, which, according to him, were carried out by Ottoman agents in the region to turn the already backward Muslims more fanatical, to the detriment of Armenians and the Russian Empire.⁶⁷⁸ In a similar fashion, in July 1908, Vorontsov-Dashkov pointed out to Stolypin

Armianskoi SSR, 1962), 101-5; Suny, *Looking toward Armenia*, 108-09. Other studies, however, chiefly by Reynolds and Karpat, demonstrate that the Ottoman attempts at improving Muslim solidarity and unity were the instruments of a grander geo-political policy aiming at weakening and countering imperial Russia rather than an ultimate political goal of uniting with their co-religionists. Michael Reynolds, 'Buffers, not Brethren: Young Turk Military Policy in the First World War and the Myth of Panturanism,' *Past and Present*, no. 203 (May 2009): 137-179; Karpat, 286.

⁶⁷⁷ For the Russian bureaucracy, these two concepts were practically the same thing since the majority of the Russian Muslims were of Turkic origin and for this reason both terms were used interchangeably in the correspondence of Russian officials. In fact as Bennigsen notes, there was no real conflict between Islam and Turkism and pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism were rather complementary. Alexandre Bennigsen, 'Panturkism and Panislamism in History and Today,' *Central Asian Survey* 3, no. 3 (1984): 40.

⁶⁷⁸ Chalkhushian, 81-8.

that it was because of the threat of pan-Islamism that the Armenian revolutionaries were in action between 1905 and 1906.⁶⁷⁹

In the capital, extreme right-wingers like Purishkevich or the columnists in *Russkoe znamia* performed this feat quite often. To the accusations of Purishkevich regarding the pan-Islamist aspirations of the Russian Muslims, a Kazan Tatar deputy, Sadri M. Maksudov responded in December 1908 that the Russian Muslims always had been loyal to Russia and there was no such teaching of pan-Islamism ‘not only among the Russian Muslims but also in the entire Muslim East.’ Maksudov went on by saying that the Russian Muslim efforts for development were not ‘fanatical and anti-cultural’ but a progressive European movement and the roots of the pan-Islamist insinuations were in Europe, where some Islamophobes created this chimera.⁶⁸⁰

The assurances of Maksudov and other Muslim deputies did not eliminate the suspicions of many high-ranking officials in St. Petersburg. As Stolypin was informed about the pan-Islamist movement and he was aware of the potential dangers it might bring about. In 1909, in a letter to the chief procurator of the Holy Synod, Lukianov, he stressed his convictions about the necessity to fight with the Islamic threat that was ‘especially dangerous for the Russian throne.’⁶⁸¹

By 1910, the intelligence reports and other observations of the local administrators about the pan-Islamists kept growing. Suspicions over these were mixed with the religious and educational demands of the Russian Muslims from the government, which forced Stolypin to organize a special commission in Kazan to discuss these issues. At the end of this meeting, Stolypin underlined the developments caused by ‘the Muslim question’, mainly brought about by the efforts of the Volga Tatars in religious, educational, and political areas. Some of the participants were less convinced about the extent of this problem, but it was concluded that the movement among the Muslims, especially among

⁶⁷⁹ ‘Borba s revoliutsionnym dvizheniem na Kavkaze,’ *KA* 34 (1929): 205-6.

⁶⁸⁰ Larisa M. Iamaeva, ed. *Musul'manskie deputaty Gosudarstvennoi dумы Rossii 1906-1917 gg. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Ufa: KITAP, 1998), 127-30.

⁶⁸¹ Dmitrii Arapov, ‘MVD Rossiskoi imperii i islam,’ *Rodina* 11 (2012): 39.

the Volga Tatars, was conflicting with the Russian imperial interests.⁶⁸² More importantly, according to Stolypin, these efforts were in line with the pan-Islamist movement.⁶⁸³

In June 1910, another congress of the missionaries in the same city repeated the pan-Islamist threat in the Russian Empire.⁶⁸⁴ In October 1910, Stolypin wrote to the head of the Department of Spiritual Affairs of Foreign Confessions, Kharuzin, that the leaders of the Young Turks decided to disseminate their pan-Islamist and pan-Turkist propaganda to Russian Muslims; as a result several agents were sent to Crimea, Turkistan, and the Caucasus disguised as pilgrims and traders. Stolypin further instructed that the police and the gendarmerie needed to be vigilant about such characters and all other measures to stop this movement had to be taken.⁶⁸⁵ The grievances of Stolypin about the Ottoman origins of the pan-Islamist threat in the Russian Empire forced him to ask Sazonov to make a diplomatic effort to close down the Turkish journal, *Tearuf-i Muslimin* (1910-11), which Stolypin believed to be spreading pan-Islamist ideas among the Russian Muslims.⁶⁸⁶ Sazonov's proposal was rejected by the Ottoman government but the Tsarist concerns continued.

Although Stolypin and Vorontsov-Dashkov were usually at odds on the formulation of the policies concerning the Russian Armenians, they agreed on the threat of the pan-Islamist movement. Vorontsov-Dashkov was particularly alert to increased pan-Islamist activity, one of the targets of which was the Caucasus. To prevent the activities of the pan-Islamist emissaries, all governors and the police were ordered to observe the activities of these emissaries and their contacts in the local population as well as the activities of the Ottoman consulates in the Caucasus.⁶⁸⁷ Soon in late December 1910, the

⁶⁸² Elena Campbell, 'The Muslim Question in late Imperial Russia' in *Russian Empire: People, Space, Power, 1700-1930*, ed. Jane Burbank (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2007), 332-6; Ananich, 574; Mustafa Tuna, 'Imperial Russia's Muslims: Inroads of Modernity,' (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2009), 319-20.

⁶⁸³ Tuna, 319-20.

⁶⁸⁴ Stephen D. Blank, 'National Education, Church and State in Tsarist Nationality Policy: The Il'minskii System,' *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 17, no. 4 (1983): 480-81.

⁶⁸⁵ Stolypin to Kharuzin, 7 October 1910 [20 October 1910], doc. no. 1, in Dmitrii Iu. Arapov, 'P.A. Stolypin o politike Turtsii v otnoshenii Rossii i panislamizme,' *Otechestvennye arkhivy*, no. 3 (2004): 95.

⁶⁸⁶ Stolypin to Sazonov, 13 December 1910 [26 December 1910], doc. no. 2, in *ibid.*, 96-7.

⁶⁸⁷ Vorontsov-Dashkov to all governors in the region, 20 September 1910 [3 November 1910], GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), o. 240, d. 74 (obshch.), ll. 156-7. Similar warnings were expressed by the Tiflis

Ottoman consul in Tiflis, Cafer Bey was under the radar of the viceroyalty as the consul was reported to be the contact point for the pan-Islamist emissaries. After his attempts to turn the local Muslims against Russia, the viceroy wanted him out.⁶⁸⁸

To growing Russian fears about the pan-Islamist movement in the South Caucasus, more suspicion was added by the involvement of Germany. As the German influence on the Ottoman Empire grew, so did the fears of the Russians about the German backing of the pan-Islamist movement. When Sazonov met Emperor Wilhelm in October 1910, for Sazonov, the most interesting part of their conversation was about the German naval power and the question of pan-Islamism. Sazonov complained about the harm that pan-Islamist propaganda could bring to Russia and warned that Russia would take action since the movement had taken on a political character with revolutionary colourings. When Sazonov remarked that Wilhelm's attitude, as the patron of the Muslims, and the possibility of the emergence of a 'Berlin Caliphate' could cause further agitation among the Russian Muslims, Wilhelm dismissed these concerns and declared that Germany had no such plans.⁶⁸⁹ Not convinced by Wilhelm's assurances, Sazonov expressed his worries to the British about the German support for pan-Islamism.⁶⁹⁰

Indeed these suspicions of a pan-Islamist threat under the patronage of Germany were known from the days when the Kaiser Wilhelm called himself 'a friend of Muslims' as he visited Jerusalem and Damascus. The Kaiser also had told 'Nicky' about how explosive this plan could be for the British.⁶⁹¹ Although the toppling of his friend Abdulhamid II by the CUP in 1908 changed the course of such an action, the German influence over the Ottoman Empire, mainly by way of the construction of the Berlin-Baghdad railway and a

Gendarmerie. The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 8 December 1910 [21 December 1910], GARF, f. 102, OO (1910), o. 240, d. 74 (obshch.) delo, l. 158.

⁶⁸⁸ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 85-6. The Russian pressure produced results and Cafer Bey was sent to Bombay from Tiflis.

⁶⁸⁹ 'Doklady Sazonova,' KA 3 (1923): 5-6.

⁶⁹⁰ Landau, 165. The British were already concerned about the pan-Islamist policies of the CUP, but the level of anxiety varied. For instance, Nicolson believed that 'the pan-Islamist movement would be a much greater threat to the British Empire than the 'Yellow Peril''. Contrary to Nicolson, the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lowther pointed out the obvious disunity among the Muslims and dismissed such a threat. Arman J. Kirakossian, *British Diplomacy and the Armenian Question: From the 1830s to 1914* (Princeton: Gomidas Institute Books, 2003), 305-6.

⁶⁹¹ Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power, 1898-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard UP/Belknap 2010), 14-15.

huge loan from the Deutsche Bank in December 1910, continued to increase. Wary of the impact of railways so close to her borders and potential implications in northern Persia, the Russians were also anxious about the revival of the use of pan-Islam by the Germans.

In January 1911, Stolypin underlined his general views about the state of the pan-Islamist movement to the Council of Ministers. Blaming the Ottoman government as the chief instigator, Stolypin believed that the CUP was aspiring to 'the unification of the Muslims of the whole world for the formation of a united Muslim state.' To stop the growing pan-Islamist sentiment and its propaganda among the Russian Muslims, Stolypin recommended various religious, educational, and administrative measures.⁶⁹² The same theme also was on the agenda for the Council of Ministers in late January 1911, with a special reference to the conditions of Baku. Discussing the application of the Ottoman government to open a consulate in Baku, Stolypin noted the increasing number of 'Turkish nationalists' under Ottoman patronage and 'strengthening of pan-Islamist propaganda' in the region.⁶⁹³ In the same document, Baku was dubbed as 'the centre of Islamism in the Caucasus' and a consulate in such a risky place would be a hotbed of these Ottoman agents. However, believing that a refusal would endanger diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire, also endorsed by the viceroy, the Council of Ministers went ahead and accepted the application.⁶⁹⁴

In the following months of 1911 various reports were sent to the viceroy about the activities of 'pan-Islamists' in the South Caucasus. The correspondence between the key branches of the gendarmerie kept on warning the viceroyalty that the pan-Islamist agent network was expanding in the South Caucasus with a view to win the Azeris for unification with their brethren across the border.⁶⁹⁵ Moreover, the viceroyalty was getting more anxious about the Muslim press in the Caucasus as the number of articles preaching pan-Islamist ideas was rising, not only provoking the Muslims but also other nationalities

⁶⁹² Stolypin's notes on the measures for counteraction to pan-Islamist and pan-Turanist (pan-Turkist) influence among the Muslim population, 15 January 1911 [28 January 1911], in Pavel A. Pozhigailo, ed., *Stolypin, Grani talanta politika* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006), 291-93.

⁶⁹³ GARF, f. 102, OO (1911), o. 241, d. 14 (ch. 1), ll. 27-30 ob.

⁶⁹⁴ On the establishment of the Turkish consulate in Baku, 29 January 1911 [11 February 1911], doc. no. 14, in *Osobyie zhurnaly Soveta Ministrov Rossiiskoi Imperii, 1911 god* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2002), 80-2.

⁶⁹⁵ Arutiunian, *Kavkazskii front*, 44.

against the Russian government.⁶⁹⁶ A further set of instructions to prevent the infiltration of the pan-Islamist emissaries focused on the monitoring of the Muslim press and Qurans from Ottoman lands and tighter surveillance of suspicious visitors from the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹⁷

These measures did not seem to work as the reports kept stressing the pan-Islamic threat. A report by the chancellery of the viceroyalty in September 1911 noted that the region was pacified after the persecution of political parties in the region like the Dashnaktsutiun and the most prominent danger in the region was now pan-Islam, directed by the Ottoman agents.⁶⁹⁸ The military intelligence was also pointing out that a score of Ottoman officers from Erzurum were sent to the Caucasus to prepare the local Muslims for an uprising in case of a Russo-Ottoman war.⁶⁹⁹

This trend went on into 1912. The border regions with considerable Muslim population, like Kars, were particularly thought to be under threat of pan-Islamist penetration. Not surprisingly, the Ottoman consul in Kars, Hasan Bey, was considered to be the main figure to orchestrate the pan-Islamists in the area according to Russian intelligence.⁷⁰⁰ The Kurdish population in these border areas was also feared to be manipulated by the propaganda of the pan-Islamist emissaries.⁷⁰¹ In May 1912, the Russian consulate in Erzurum reported that the CUP was preparing for a holy war in the Caucasus.⁷⁰² By 1912, in all major cities of the South Caucasus, wherever they looked, the top Tsarist officials were seeing pan-Islamist emissaries in various forms.

⁶⁹⁶ The chancellery of the viceroy of the Caucasus, OO to all governors in the region, 27 March 1911 [9 April 1911], in *Dokumenty po Russkoi politike na Zakavkaze* (Baku: Tipografiia Azerbaidzhan, 1920), 141-43.

⁶⁹⁷ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 89.

⁶⁹⁸ Arutiunian, *Kavkazskii front*, 42.

⁶⁹⁹ Sarkisian, *Ekspansionistskaia politika Osmanskoi Imperii*, 108.

⁷⁰⁰ Arutiunian, *Kavkazskii front*, 44.

⁷⁰¹ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 29 September 1912 [12 October 1912], GARF, f. 102, OO (1912) d. 74 (obshch.), l. 113-113 ob; Mikhail S. Lazarev, *Kurdskaia vopros (1891-1917)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1972), 213.

⁷⁰² Somakian, 140.

The Perception of the Growing Pan-Islamist Threat by Tsarist Officials and Its Impact on Russian-Azeri Relations by 1912

As Bennigsen argues, pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism were not political movements with a concrete political ideology. As by-products of the Muslim challenge to modernity, they were rather vague frameworks calling for more solidarity and cooperation among Muslims.⁷⁰³ There were some ideologues and politicians with sympathies for them as political movements in the sense that the Russian authorities saw them, but their impact was far less influential on the Russian Muslim political movement and the Ottoman government and certainly not the driving force behind both.⁷⁰⁴ As Meyer and Reynolds note, the Russian perception of the pan-Islamist threat was far more than what the actual situation was.⁷⁰⁵ However, this was not how the ministers, the viceroy, and the Okhrana chiefs viewed the level of the pan-Islamist threat, which, in turn, reflected on their dealings and relations with the Azeris and the Ottoman Empire.

Why was there such an exaggerated Russian perception of a pan-Islamist threat in the empire and the Caucasus? An important reason was related to the growing politicization and the modernization of the Russian Muslims after 1905. After the end of the revolution, Russian Muslims were demanding more political, cultural, and religious rights. They were aiming at modernizing their education, reaching to the wider Muslim world and organizing themselves as a political force. Given their numbers and the general conservative standpoint of the Stolypin administration, the Russian Muslims were raising suspicions for the Tsarist bureaucracy. The attitude of the Orthodox Church and the right-wing parties in the State Duma toward the political movement of Russian Muslims also added to the emergence of the negative perception by both the public and the government.⁷⁰⁶ Moreover, the traditionalist Muslim clergy who were critical of the reformist direction of the Russian Muslim politics also contributed to this negative

⁷⁰³ Bennigsen, 'Panturkism and Panislamism,' 40-1; Adeeb Khalid, 'Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus to 1917,' in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 5, *The Islamic World in the Age of Western Dominance*, ed. Francis Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 199.

⁷⁰⁴ Tuna, 325-6.

⁷⁰⁵ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 90-1; Meyer, 'Turkic Worlds,' 93.

⁷⁰⁶ Tuna, 325-6.

perception.⁷⁰⁷ Soon, almost all political or cultural demands by the Russian Muslims began to be associated with pan-Islamism, which, for suspicious Tsarist minds, increasingly became anything affiliated with the Russian Muslim movement.⁷⁰⁸

Another major contributing factor was the CUP's policies toward the Russian Muslims. Being a border region, the South Caucasus was seen as an ideal place for the CUP to increase its cooperation with the Muslims of the region. The CUP's calls for increased cooperation with the Russian Muslims, improved communication networks and the Russian Muslim presence within the CUP aggravated Russian fears. The CUP, for its internal and external aims wanted to use the solidarity with its fellow Muslim brethren as leverage against the Russian Empire, although this would increasingly be so after 1912. As Reynolds argues, pan-Islamism or pan-Turkism was not the rationale of Ottoman policies but rather 'the instruments of the policies.'⁷⁰⁹ Nevertheless, from the revolution of 1908 to 1912, the increased Ottoman interest in the Russian Muslims contributed to the growing Russian fears of pan-Islamism. In the case of the Russian Muslim political movement, almost all actions of the Ottoman government concerning the Russian Muslims were seen as part of their pan-Islamist agenda and, naturally, all Ottoman agents who were in touch with the Russian Muslims were pan-Islamist emissaries for the Tsarist authorities.

In March 1912, deputy Maksudov made another critical speech in the State Duma about the Tsarist policies regarding the Russian Muslims on the grounds of pan-Islamism. He noted that the arrests of mullahs and teachers and raids on Muslim establishments on the charges of pan-Islamism were directed at obstructing Muslim progress and all its cultural aspirations were labelled with the word 'pan-Islamism'. Calling the pan-Islamist movement a 'product of hostile fantasy and a creation of political missionaries', Maksudov dismissed the existence of such a movement that called for the unification of all Muslims from India to Africa—a feat which even Alexander the Great and Napoleon

⁷⁰⁷ Meyer, 'Turkic worlds,' 124-5; idem., 'The Economics of Muslim Cultural Reform,' 264.

⁷⁰⁸ Khalid, 199; Nadir Devlet, *Rusya Türklerinin Milli Mücadele Tarihi (1905-1917)* (Ankara: TTK, 1999), 157-60; Bagirova, 191.

⁷⁰⁹ Reynolds, 'Buffers, not Brethren,' 138-39.

failed to achieve. This was a myth the missionaries and the scholars of the non-Muslim states created and it was used against the Russian Muslims.⁷¹⁰

Maksudov was right in suspecting that the attitude of the Russian government toward the Azeris changed from 1907 to 1912. By 1907, they were the least revolutionized, the least literate and least urban, and the most populous major nationality in the South Caucasus. However, from then on, they were building upon the legacy of the broader Russian Muslim political movement in the revolution of 1905. The consequent revolutions in the neighbouring Muslim empires added another dimension to the Tsarist view of Azeris. In addition to their interaction with the Persian and Ottoman revolutions, the number of Azeri newspapers and periodicals were soaring, their schools were being modernized, and the Azeri intelligentsia was interested in the empire-wide Muslim question, which was revolved around the political, cultural, and religious demands of Russian Muslims.

The Russian government and the viceroyalty were becoming more suspicious about the political aspirations of the Azeris, which they increasingly believed to be influenced by the pan-Islamist movement. From 1910 onward, most of the Azeri political, cultural, and religious activities, as well as the Ottoman and German moves in the South Caucasus, were seen as part of the grander pan-Islamist movement. From the top levels of Tsarist bureaucracy in St. Petersburg and Tiflis to local governors and police branches, the pan-Islamist threat was increasingly noted. By 1912, the general views of the Russian officialdom about the dangers of the pan-Islamist movement came closer to the Armenian press, which was going on about it since the revolutionary period when the Armenian publicist Chalkhushian defined pan-Islam as ‘the devil’ behind the Armenian-Azeri clashes of 1905–1906.⁷¹¹ Against the accusations of the Armenian press, Azeri intellectuals like Agaoglu wrote rebuttals arguing that the Armenians were doing this on purpose to damage the image of the Russian Muslims and preserve their ‘privileged position’ in the Russian Empire.⁷¹²

⁷¹⁰ The introduction of Deputy S.N. Maksudov to the discussion of expenditure estimates of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for 1912, 13 March 1912 [26 March 1912], doc. 49, in Iamaeva, 178-184.

⁷¹¹ Chalkhushian, 77.

⁷¹² Shissler, 154-55.

By 1912, among the three major nationalities in the South Caucasus, the Azeris were considered as the most potentially troublesome according to viceroy. With their nascent national movement, numbers, and the logistic advantage of being on the border area with two Muslim empires, the Muslims of the South Caucasus were thought to be the most explosive nationalities of all and the most likely candidates for separatism by Vorontsov-Dashkov.⁷¹³ Although the pan-Islamist and pan-Turkist propaganda did not produce what they wanted in the region for now, the authorities had to be vigilant to prevent its success.⁷¹⁴ Similarly, when Stolypin became chairman of the Council of Ministers, he had considered the Armenians, owing to the Dashnak strength, presented the most imminent threat for the stability in the region. Then, as the Dashnaks were eliminated as a political force, Stolypin's chief concern about the South Caucasus gradually became the pan-Islamist threat and this remained until his death.

By 1912, the Azeris were now the most pressing threat in the region, replacing the Armenians, who were seen as the most troublesome nationality in the region under Golitsyn administration. This gradual change was in line with the improved relations between the Russian administration and the Armenians. Now, against the growing danger of the pan-Islamist movement in the South Caucasus, the Russian Armenians were seen in a more favourable light by the Tsarist bureaucracy—particularly because its unstable elements (i.e., the Dashnaks) were weeded out and the other pillars of political power, the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie, were ready to cooperate. The viceroy was contented that the Armenians, like the Georgians, had no option but to ally themselves with the Tsarist regime without which they would be absorbed by the Muslim population.⁷¹⁵

⁷¹³ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 9.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

The Viceroyalty and the Armenian Bourgeoisie (1907–1912)

The Viceroyalty and the Armenian Bourgeoisie by 1907

Travellers to the South Caucasus often sang praises of the region's natural beauty. The urban life in the region, on the other hand, did not impress the same travellers as much. Even Baku, with its enormous wealth, disappointed European visitors. Nevertheless, there was one common sight in all the major cities in the South Caucasus that attracted the attention of the travellers: the economic dominance of the Armenians. The Armenian urban element was the driving element behind this. The small shopkeepers, the growing professional class, and the merchants were the visible facade of this element. Then, there was the high industrial and financial class that produced very famous names like the Mantashevs, Liazonovs, and Gukasians. In Tiflis, they were buying out the Georgian nobles and building landmarks in the heart of the city. In Baku and Batumi, Armenian oilmen were successfully competing with the likes of the Nobels, Rothschilds or state-backed Russian oil companies.

Since the Russians captured the region in 1828, this element had various reasons to be on good terms with the Russian administration. For both sides, this arrangement generally worked until it was hampered by the policies of Golitsyn and the climax of anti-Tsarist resistance between 1903 and 1906. However, once the properties of the Armenian Church were given back and the October Manifesto was in place, many urban Armenians felt that they could go back to the old equilibrium. From the day he came to Tiflis in 1905, the viceroy believed that the urban Armenian element needed to be won over for the interests of the Russian administration. Along with the Armenian Church, this economically strong element could help the viceroyalty handle its relations with its Armenian population, who were considered by the viceroy as 'conservative and practical by nature.'⁷¹⁶

Vorontsov-Dashkov's efforts to annul the confiscation act and end the hostilities between the Armenians and Azeris were important in gaining the loyalties of the Armenian

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 9.

population at large and the Armenian bourgeoisie. As the stability in the region improved and the national discontent over the church became less intense, the viceroy knew that the Armenian bourgeoisie would be more eager to keep its interests by allying itself to the Tsarist regime.⁷¹⁷ The new political setting after the revolution of 1905 allowed the Armenian bourgeoisie to demonstrate its influence in the State Duma. Since the Dashnaks boycotted the First Duma, all of the Armenian deputies from the South Caucasus were from the Armenian bourgeoisie and sat with the Kadets. Although eclipsed by the Dashnaks in the elections for the Second Duma, the urban Armenian element was consolidating its economic power as the region stabilized.

Soon, this economic prowess was used for political and cultural influence. The urban Armenian elements were again a formidable power in local politics with their numbers in the City Dumas. As a sign of their urban influence, the Armenians had the highest ratio of hereditary and personal honourable citizens (*potomstvennye and lichnye pochetnye grazhdane*) and general urban population in the South Caucasus.⁷¹⁸ Although the majority of the Armenians were peasants, the Armenian bourgeoisie was the dominant leading force in economic and cultural life among the Russian Armenians as it led in the improvement of Armenian schooling, publication of newspapers and periodicals, and organization of charities. These were accommodated by the policies of the viceroy, who was keen on having two conservative elements of the Armenian political scene—the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie—on his side. By 1907, there was only one problem in this new setting: the Dashnaks and their increased power among all sectors of Armenian society owing to their efforts between 1903 and 1907.

The Russian Crackdown on the Dashnaktsutun as a Part of the Rapprochement

In the initial phases of its existence, the Dashnaktsutun originally had adherents mainly among the lower middle classes and peasants. However, its base diversified between

⁷¹⁷ Suny, 'Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule,' 135-6; Villari, 131-2.

⁷¹⁸ Bakhshi Ishkhanian, *Narodnosti Kavkaza* (Petrograd: M.V. Popova, 1917), 108-11.

1903 and 1906. During this chaotic period, many members of the Armenian bourgeoisie found the Dashnaks as the most capable organization to protect their interests. This became more widespread during the Armenian-Azeri clashes. Many wealthy Armenians found it quite practical to fund the Dashnaks for the security of their lives and properties. The Dashnaks won over many urban Armenians because of the leadership they demonstrated against Tsarist policies and the Azeris.

In such an atmosphere, the well-to-do Armenians had to endure paying taxes to the party and forgot about the earlier expropriations and assassinations by the Dashnaks.⁷¹⁹ However, as the regime recovered and the revolutionary organizations were weakened by Tsarist persecutions, wealthy Armenians became more vocal in expressing their grievances about the methods of the Dashnaks.⁷²⁰ More importantly, the Dashnaks officially added socialism to their programme in their fourth annual congress in Vienna in 1907. These elements in the Armenian bourgeoisie wanted the Dashnaks to fight for their original cause—the liberation of ‘Ottoman Armenia’—and leave matters to them in the South Caucasus.⁷²¹ Instead, the Dashnaks were making overtures to the Second International and tarnishing their image with both the Tsarist and the Armenian bourgeoisie of the South Caucasus. As a result, the Dashnaks began to lose support from the Armenian bourgeoisie.⁷²²

This was what the viceroy was expecting. The next step came with the trial of the Dashnaktsutjun, masterminded by St. Petersburg and directed by Lyzhin. Many top-level officials in the capital believed that the viceroy’s methods with the Dashnaks were too lenient and the trial was a way to crush the Dashnak organization and its supporters. Among the party affiliates were the members of the Armenian bourgeoisie, who developed sympathies for the party when it was spearheading the Armenian resistance against the Tsarist policies and the Azeris. The trial process did not spare many of them

⁷¹⁹ Geifman, 24.

⁷²⁰ Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism*, 44-5; Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 18. The Armenian bourgeoisie particularly disliked the Dashnak expropriations. In 1901, in order to surmount their financial difficulties, the Dashnaks had accepted as a principle the extortion of money, mainly from wealthy Armenians and started a series of operations, called *Potorig* (Storm). Until the official repudiation of such activities in the fourth world congress of the party in 1907, these operations produced substantial sums for the party. Dasnabedian, 62-3.

⁷²¹ Kazemzadeh, 18.

⁷²² Suny, ‘Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule,’ 135-6.

as many wealthy Armenians, as well as professionals, were arrested on the grounds of active participation in the party or assisting it.

The central government and the Lyzhin did not specifically target the Armenian bourgeoisie and they basically saw the bourgeoisie as a useful element for the Tsarist establishment once it was cleansed of the revolutionary elements. This was quite similar to the view of the viceroy. The basic difference was their preferred method of weeding out the revolutionary elements among the Armenian bourgeoisie. Those in St. Petersburg believed that by arresting all the suspicious individuals affiliated with the Dashnaks they would both destroy the organization and instil fear among the entire Armenian society in the South Caucasus. The party was so entangled with the Armenian population in the region that the trial process ended up with the arrests of many influential public figures; men of industry, commerce, and finance; and urban professionals.

Vorontsov-Dashkov believed that these arrests and the ensuing fear were destroying the scheme that he wanted to establish. In a more stable political and economic environment, which the viceroy succeeded in bringing to the region after 1905, the Armenian bourgeoisie would be very willing to replace the Dashnaks as the leading Armenian political power in the South Caucasus. Apart from the political conflict, the socialist leanings of the Dashnaks, and their earlier distasteful measures against the Armenian bourgeoisie, there were the other obvious reasons why they would gradually reject supporting them in the Russian Empire. The viceroy noted that these people were arrested during the trial process to prove the revolutionary aspirations of the entire Russian Armenian population and without his consent. The use of normal judiciary processes on the party organization on a limited scale could have done the job.⁷²³ Instead, the natural allies of the regime in the viceroy's new arrangement were in prison, thereby undermining the confidence of them in his administration and the economic stability in the region.

Personally, the viceroy had already demonstrated his views on the importance of the Armenian bourgeoisie by appealing to the Ministry of Justice for the detainment of the

⁷²³ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 7.

well-known merchant, Melik-Azariants. The arrest of such influential individuals, he believed, was creating a negative sentiment among the Armenians against the regime.⁷²⁴ Despite his protests, Melik-Azariants and another wealthy Armenian merchant from Rostov-on-Don, Ivan M. Shaposhnikov, were suspected of being the main financial backers of the party and both remained in prison. Nevertheless, the first wave of the trial process, although disliked by the viceroy because of the complications it brought, served the purpose of eliminating the Dashnaks within the Armenian bourgeoisie. Despite some grievances related to the trial, the Armenian bourgeoisie was now free of Dashnaks and was becoming the dominant political force among the Russian Armenians and had various reasons to be on the side of the Tsarist regime.

The Economic Dimension of the Rapprochement

As the process of elimination of the Dashnak elements within the Armenian bourgeoisie went on, the viceroy was making sure that the Armenian bourgeoisie's economic interests were safe. The oil industry was the starting point especially considering a general slump in global oil prices. The existence of a strong labour movement in the sector, an important legacy of the revolution, was disturbing both the viceroyalty and the industrialists. Soon, the growing demands of the workers were followed by the complaints of the industrialists.⁷²⁵ The falling oil prices from 1908 onward made this collaboration between the industrialists and the Tsarist administration even more intense.⁷²⁶ As a result, Stolypin urged the viceroy to crush organized labour, which the viceroy carried out.⁷²⁷

⁷²⁴ Vorontsov-Dashkov to the Minister of Justice, 23 April 1909 [6 May 1909], SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 880, l. 78.

⁷²⁵ Stolypin to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 2 February 1907 [15 February 1907], in Pozhigailo, *P.A. Stolypin, Grani talanta politika*, 355.

⁷²⁶ Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 45-50.

⁷²⁷ Altstadt-Mirhadi, 'Baku,' 307.

The Armenian oil tycoons were on the government's side when the labour movement was crushed. With the end of the political conflict, Armenian oil tycoons continued to thrive in Baku and Batumi as well as in their foreign operations. The Mantashevs, despite the death in 1911 of Aleksander Mantashev, the founder of the dynasty, kept expanding their oil operations in Baku and Batumi as well as investing in the Caucasian commercial bank, which was the only bank in the region to be included in the St. Petersburg Exchange.⁷²⁸ Another Armenian oil man, S. Liazonov, established companies in Europe to attract foreign capital to Baku for his companies. The Armenian commercial might in Baku was safe as the figures for the top-level merchants demonstrated.⁷²⁹

In the professional jobs in the oil industry, the Armenians also had a good position, hence more reasons to support the Tsarist efforts for the stability.⁷³⁰ The Armenian economic success in Baku was not limited to the oil sector. The Armenian commercial might in Baku was safe as the figures for the top-level merchants demonstrated.⁷³¹ In smaller-scale shops and the urban professions in Baku, the Armenians also kept doing well after the regime's recovery.⁷³²

In Tiflis, like in the pre-revolutionary days, the Georgian intelligentsia continued to rant about the Armenian economic superiority in their traditional capital.⁷³³ The Georgian nobility continued to lose their estates to the Armenians. Fearing that this Armenian economic dominance could incite the Georgians, the viceroy had to intervene in some cases, like the sale of Baratov's estates to the well-known Armenian merchant, Aramians.⁷³⁴ Nevertheless, the Armenian economic success went on in Tiflis.

⁷²⁸ Khachatur Dadayan, 'Armenian Commercial Presence in Tiflis (Late Middle Ages-1918),' *21-st Century* 4, no. 2 (2008): 86.

⁷²⁹ Sariahmetoğlu, 413-14.

⁷³⁰ Baberowski, 336-7; Suny, 'Eastern Armenians under Tsarist Rule,' 125.

⁷³¹ Sariahmetoğlu, 413-14.

⁷³² In 1911, 20 of 24 shoe shops, 22 of 31 clothes shops, and 13 of 15 tobacco shops in Baku were owned by Armenians. Mosesova, 45. For instance, among the lawyers enlisted in the bar of Baku, there were 48 Armenians, 38 Russians, and only 4 Azeris in 1910. Baberowski, 323.

⁷³³ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 18; Parsons, 280.

⁷³⁴ Khatissian, 'The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part I),' 43; Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 140. Although Aramians agreed to sell back after the demands from the viceroy through Khatissian, Baratov could not pay his asking price and the estates remained with Aramians.

In the first place, the Armenian industrial presence in Tiflis had been strongly felt. Thirty-eight of 72 industrial companies in the city were owned by Armenians. The vodka factories of the brothers Sesian, the leather factory of Adelkhanian (where Stalin and his father worked), brick factories of Martirosian, and the copper works of Melik-Azariants were some of those plants.⁷³⁵ When some of the Armenian capitalists founded the Merchant Bank of Tiflis in 1912 with a capital of 5 million roubles, the Georgians could only respond with the formation of Tiflis Nobility Land Bank, with 147.300 roubles worth of capital.⁷³⁶

One of the dimensions of the rapprochement was the viceroy's economic vision for future of the South Caucasus and the suitability of the Armenian industrialists and financiers as well as the professional classes for it. Vorontsov-Dashkov actively supported the establishment of private banks and companies in the region to attract more capital.⁷³⁷ His efforts to introduce *zemstvo* in the region, commercialization of the agriculture, and other means of attracting capital to the region would bring more benefits to the most urban, literate, and commercial nationality.⁷³⁸ With its economic strength and more-extensive networks, the Armenian bourgeoisie was a good fit for his economic vision in the region.

One of the leading Specifists, Ishkhanian, observed this. The economic policies of the viceroy were the next steps of capitalist development in the Caucasus. According to Ishkhanian, only the Armenians [bourgeoisie] 'to a certain extent' possessed the qualities to survive in this capitalist transformation led by foreign capital, whereas the leading elements of the Georgians and Azeris, the landowning classes, would be doomed. This Marxist account of the economic side of the Tsarist view of the nationalities question underlined why both the Russian administration and the Armenian bourgeoisie had mutual interests against the more feudally structured Georgians and Azeris.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁵ Dadayan, *Armenian Commercial Presence in Tiflis*, 82.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., 78.

⁷³⁷ Nikolai N. Tumakov, 'Upravlenie Kavkazom I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkovym,' *Vestnik Riazanskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta imeni S.A. Esenina* 26, no. 1 (2010): 43.

⁷³⁸ Compared with the Georgians and the Azeris, the Armenians had higher rates of literacy, schooling and urbanization on the eve of the Great War. Ishkhanian, 96-116; Erkanian, 50; Pipes, 'Demographic and Ethnographic Changes in Transcaucasia,' 44-5; Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za piatiletie upravleniia Kavkazom*, 51.

⁷³⁹ Ishkhanian, 110-116.

As the Dashnak organization was hit by the trial and lost power, the Armenian bourgeoisie filled the power vacuum among the Russian Armenians. Putting order and stability in the region as their priority, which was now maintained by the Tsarist anti-revolutionary drive, the Armenian bourgeoisie was becoming the dominant element among the Russian Armenians once again. An important part of this was the accommodation of their economic interests by the economic policies of the viceroy, which were primarily calling for expansion of capitalist development in the region. The viceroy believed that the region would prosper with the establishment of more banks and industrial enterprises to make use of the region's natural resources and commercialization of agriculture. These projections suited the traits of the Armenian bourgeoisie far better than the politically dominant Georgian and Azeri classes.

The Rise of the Armenian Bourgeoisie as a Political Force in the South Caucasus

The elimination of the Dashnak organization in the South Caucasus and the compatibility of the economic interests of the Armenian bourgeoisie and the viceroy's economic policies paved the way for the Armenian bourgeoisie to consolidate its political power. Empire-wide, one of the venues through which they could make their voice heard was the State Duma. However, like all national minorities, the Armenian representation was curtailed. In the Second Duma, there was a Dashnak domination of the Armenian deputies from the Caucasus. In the Third Duma, there were only two Armenian deputies from the Caucasus: Ivan Saghatelian, a Dashnak who sat with the Trudoviki and Moisei S. Adzhemov, who was with the Kadets. Therefore, the State Duma was not the ideal place for the Armenian bourgeoisie to help their political ascent. Instead, they concentrated their power in the local politics, in the City Dumas and *upravas*, where they had always been a major force thanks to their economic strength.

In the minor cities of the South Caucasus with considerable Armenian population, such as Erevan and Elizavetpol, the Armenian bourgeoisie was understandably influential and could outclass the other nationalities for seats in the City Dumas. The real competition was in Tiflis and Baku where the populations were divided between the major nationalities and bigger economic and political interests were at stake. In Baku, thanks to the half-Christian rule, the Armenians, along with the Russian elements, were influential in the City Duma although the Azeris still had the majority.⁷⁴⁰

In the administrative capital of the region, the Armenians found a more suitable ground. The Armenian population in Tiflis was considerably larger than in Baku and the economic competition was not as fierce. Traditionally a local political force in the Tiflis City Duma and *uprava*, the Armenians made up 72 percent of the voting franchise for the Tiflis Duma by 1902.⁷⁴¹ Between 1870 and 1916, nine out of 11 mayors were Armenians.⁷⁴² The Armenian domination was especially frustrating to the Georgians who called the Tiflis City Duma ‘Sololaki Parliament’ hinting at the Armenian domination.⁷⁴³

The mayors, elected by the City Dumas, were of political importance in local politics and could help further the interests of the Armenian bourgeoisie in its consolidation of political power. In 1909, the former deputy to the mayor, Aleksandr I. Khatisian, became the new mayor of Tiflis. Born into a high civil-servant family in Tiflis in 1874, Khatisian studied medicine in Moscow and Kharkov universities and then went to Germany and France for further education. Returning to Tiflis in 1900, he was elected as a member of the City Duma in 1902, a member of the *uprava* in 1906, and the deputy to the mayor in 1907.⁷⁴⁴ In 1909, because of his illness, the mayor, Vasilii N. Cherkezov (a Georgian), left his post to his deputy Khatisian, who won the mayoralty elections in September 1910. The Georgian nationalist newspapers were not happy that an Armenian won the post of

⁷⁴⁰ Audrey Altstadt, ‘The Baku City Duma - Arena for Elite Conflict,’ *Central Asian Survey* 5, no. 3-4 (1986): 54-7.

⁷⁴¹ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 18.

⁷⁴² Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia: The First Year, 1918-1919*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 68.

⁷⁴³ Parsons, 336. Sololaki was the part of Tiflis, where many prosperous members of the Armenian bourgeoisie resided.

⁷⁴⁴ Karapetian, 95-6.

mayor of Tiflis as they wrote that ‘even if Khatisian could illuminate the city by the sun at night and make the streets out of marbles, we would nevertheless be against his election since he was an Armenian.’⁷⁴⁵

Khatisian had sympathies for the Dashnaktsutiun, mainly because of the role it assumed for the Russian Armenians between 1903 and 1907. From 1906 onward when he first became deputy and then mayor of Tiflis, he considered himself as ‘an intermediary between the authorities and the revolutionary parties (i.e., the Dashnaks). His sympathies for the Dashnaks and perhaps his brother Konstantin’s more conspicuous links to them put Khatisian under the radar of the Okhrana branch in Tiflis, which reported him as a Dashnak sympathizer in its struggle with the Tsarist regime.’⁷⁴⁶

The viceroy believed that the common Armenian sympathy for the Dashnaks in their struggle between 1903 and 1907 needed to be understood. More importantly, when the party organization was crushed in the South Caucasus, the members of the Armenian bourgeoisie would be natural supporters of his administration. Since Khatisian was not a conspicuous activist of the party and the viceroy fully trusted him as mayor, the Okhrana reports pointing out his Dashnak sympathy did not prevent his rise as mayor of Tiflis.⁷⁴⁷

The good relations of Khatisian with the vicerealty were also annoying the Armenian SDs. For Spandarian, an eminent Armenian SD, Khatisian had no firm political views as he depicted the mayor as a pragmatic character: ‘The favourite of the wife of the viceroy and all Russian administration, blessed by the Catholicos and the Exarch of Georgia, congratulated by the Okhrana and investigated by the police; drinking to the health of the Russian army while at the same time he was a Dashnak, Social Democrat and Kadet.’⁷⁴⁸

Indeed, Khatisian was a pragmatic man and represented the compatible urban Armenian element for the new course of the Tsarist policies in the South Caucasus. Having

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid. Not all Georgian newspapers held such a dim view of Khatisian as the new mayor. A rightist Georgian newspaper wrote: ‘Every non-Georgian is an evil, but Mr. Khatisian is the least of those evils, thanks to his attitude toward the Georgian people. Khatisian, ‘The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part I),’ 42.

⁷⁴⁶ Reference of the Tiflis Okhrana, 12 November 1908 [25 November 1908], SSSA, f. 95, o. 1, d. 30, l. 49; Reference of the Tiflis Okhrana, 30 April 1909 [13 May 1909], SSSA f. 95, o. 1, d. 31, l. 334. He officially joined to the Dashnaktsutiun in 1917.

⁷⁴⁷ The Head of Odessa OO to the Director of the Department of Police, N.P. Zuev, 4 May 1909 [17 May 1909], GARF, f. 102, OO (1909), o. 239, d. 14 (obshch.), ll. 163-163 ob.

⁷⁴⁸ Quoted in Ostrovskii, 521-22.

appreciated the Dashnak efforts between 1903 and 1907, he saw what was coming as the Tsarist regime recovered. He understood what Stolypin and the viceroy had in mind for the Russian Armenians and the Dashnaks were not a part of it. The Dashnaks could go back to their original aim, to help the Ottoman Armenians, while the Armenian urban element could be on good terms with the viceroy and handle the Russian Armenian affairs. He knew that the viceroy's policies would accommodate the Russian Armenians, the Armenian bourgeoisie in particular, and this could be used to address the cultural, educational, and political demands of the Russian Armenians. After 1909, his efforts facilitated these demands and the translation of economic power of the Armenian bourgeoisie into local politics.

From 1909 on, the Armenian bourgeoisie was the leading power in the City Duma in Tiflis, with Khatisian as the mayor, his other brother Georgii, (a lawyer), as a member of the *Uprava*, and another Armenian, Aleksandr M. Argutin-Dolgorukii, as his deputy. Because of the generous donations by the Armenian industrialists, Armenian educational establishments expanded. For instance, Mantashev bankrolled the new building of the Nersesian Seminary in the outskirts of Tiflis in 1912 and the Armenian Benevolent Society of the Caucasus.⁷⁴⁹ Another charitable institution led by the Armenian bourgeoisie, Baku Cultural Union (founded in 1906), was also active in the organization of Armenian schools and theatres. Although there were suspicions of nationalist ideas in these organizations, they went on operating.⁷⁵⁰

The viceroy did not mind the expansion of Armenian schooling and the campaign for literacy, even with hints of national themes in the theatres and books. The Russian Armenians were going for the state schools instead of their community schools, which were closing down because of the lack of students. Therefore, a liberal approach rather than a restrictive one was a better choice for improved relations with the Armenian subjects of the Russian Empire.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁹ Anastas Mikoyan, *Memoirs of Anastas Mikoyan*, vol. 1: *The Path of Struggle* (Madison: Sphinx Press, 1988), 28; Dadayan, *Armenian Commercial Presence in Tiflis*, 87-8.

⁷⁵⁰ Petrov's report to the Minister of Internal Affairs, 16 April 1911 [29 April 1911], RGIA, f. 821 o. 7, d. 355, ll. 30-40.

⁷⁵¹ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 31-2.

Apart from the primary schooling and literacy campaigns, led by Khatisian, the Armenian bourgeoisie was supportive of the idea of the establishment of a university in Tiflis.⁷⁵² The idea itself was not new as the Caucasus yearned for a university, although there were some like Velichko who had reservations about it and argued that a university in Tiflis would be an ‘academy of Armenian intrigue.’⁷⁵³ When the idea was introduced again in 1912, these reservations were still intact in St. Petersburg as Kokovtsov, not very fond of the idea of a university in the Caucasus, asked the viceroy whether a university in Tiflis would be an area of influence for the Dashnaks.⁷⁵⁴ The viceroy responded that this was far from the truth. Counting on the ‘bourgeois-conservative Armenians,’ Vorontsov-Dashkov noted that the Georgian youth would be a bigger problem in a university. For the viceroy, a university in Tiflis, far from being a centre for separatism, would bolster the knowledge of written Russian of the locals, whose knowledge of Russian was mostly limited to spoken Russian.⁷⁵⁵

For the Tsarist authorities, the understanding between the Armenian bourgeoisie and the vicerealty also had a Muslim connection. While the Tsarist authorities feared a growing pan-Islamist movement, for the Armenians it was the numbers of the Muslims that shaped their political agenda. A report in 1911 underlined that the Armenian leaders gave up on the idea of an autonomous Armenia as they believed that it would eventually be absorbed by Muslims, which was shared by the viceroy, who believed that this was essentially why the Armenians would not support separatism in the South Caucasus.⁷⁵⁶

With the start of the Dashnak trial, the Armenian bourgeoisie was becoming the dominant force among the Russian Armenians. With the understanding it had with the vicerealty,

⁷⁵² Karapetian, 96-7. The Azeris and the Georgians also supported the campaign for a university in the Caucasus. For instance, Tagizade donated a considerable sum for the cause. Khatissian, ‘The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part III),’ 94-5.

⁷⁵³ Velichko, 52-3.

⁷⁵⁴ When Kokovtsov met Khatisian in St. Petersburg to talk about this, he told him that a university in the Caucasus would be hopeless since the students there would not listen to their professors and good students from the Caucasus could study in the Russian universities. All ministers except for the minister of Agriculture opposed the idea of a university in the Caucasus. Khatissian, ‘The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part III),’ 97.

⁷⁵⁵ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Kokovtsov, 12 May 1912 [25 May 1912], in Diakin, 642-3. Despite the opposition of the ministers, the viceroy convinced Nicholas II about an institute of higher learning in the Caucasus. In 1913, the proposal to establish a polytechnic institute in Tiflis was approved by Nicholas II but it had to be postponed because of the outbreak of the First World War.

⁷⁵⁶ Petrov to Kharuzin, August/September 1911, RGIA f. 821, o. 7, d. 355, ll. 4-4 ob.

it was able to use its economic power in local politics, which in turn was used to meet the demands of the Russian Armenians. By dominating the press in the South Caucasus, bankrolling the expanding Armenian schooling and charitable institutions, the Armenian bourgeoisie was also a key cultural element among the Armenians in the region. Vorontsov-Dashkov's vision of the role of the Armenian bourgeoisie once the Dashnaks were gone was becoming real as the policies of the viceroy continued to facilitate the growing influence of the Armenian bourgeoisie on their community. With the help of a useful intermediary, Khatisian, the viceroy achieved what he wanted regarding the Armenian bourgeoisie by 1912.

Conclusion

When Stolypin became Prime Minister, he knew how vital the national question was. Five years of experience proved him right: the last word he kept repeating on his deathbed after the assassination in the Kiev opera was 'Finland', a region where the Tsarist policies of nationalities had created nothing but discontent in the last decade.⁷⁵⁷ The South Caucasus was another chronic problem in this regard and this was felt in the revolution of 1905. The newly established viceroyalty needed to regain the loyalties of the local population if it was to maintain stability in this economically and strategically important border region.

Vorontsov-Dashkov had been in the Caucasus earlier and he had an idea about the national conflict among the local population. When he came to the region as the viceroy in 1905, however, the main problem was that the national grievances were now held against the Russian state and this had to be fixed. For the viceroy, once the region was free of the revolutionary organizations, these grievances could be gradually sorted out by more accommodating measures. Unlike his predecessor Golitsyn and the right-wingers

⁷⁵⁷ Bok, 342.

like Purishkevich, he was not fond of repressive measures that could hurt the national feelings of the local population. This relatively liberal approach in cultural and educational matters, coupled with a sound economic development, would help improve the relations of the Russian administration with the nationalities.

However, the relations of the Russian government with the major nationalities in the region took different paths from 1907 to 1912. The social composition of the Georgians was feudal and the traditional ally of the Russian regime, the Georgian nobility, was still losing its wealth and political power, which it attributed to Russian policies. The Georgian peasantry was equally miserable. The common denominator of these two groups' discontent was broader economic phenomena of diminishing returns on the land and the growing importance of commerce and industry, where they lagged behind the Russians, foreigners, and Armenians.

The viceroy was aware of this structural problem and believed that the introduction of agrarian reforms as well as administrative ones like the *zemstvo* could improve things. The expectations of the viceroy were not fulfilled as some of these reforms could not even be introduced and some of them simply needed more time to make an impact. Therefore, the Georgian national movement still retained its mass support despite the Tsarist persecution of its leaders like Zhordania.

More interestingly, the Georgian clergy became more vocal after 1907 about its demands for ecclesiastical autonomy. Giving away such privileges to a national group within the Russian Orthodox Church's hierarchy was not really an option and it ended with the persecution of eminent members of the pro-autocephalist Georgian clergy, adding another source of national discontent among the Georgians. By 1912, both the agrarian and the religious sources of the Georgian discontent were in place and hence the continuing influence of the Georgian Mensheviks, who were a part of the broader Russian Social Democratic Movement, as well as the Socialist International. Knowing that there were no short-term solutions, the viceroy still believed in reforms and contended that the Georgian national movement did not pose as much of a threat to the Russian rule as the Azeris in the region.

Before the revolution of 1905, there were not many reasons for the Tsarist administration to be concerned about an Azeri national movement. However, the revolution of 1905 changed the picture as they became a part of the empire-wide Muslim political movement and experienced the bloody clashes with the Armenians. In the aftermath, like other Muslim groups of the empire, the Azeris were becoming more interested in having greater political, cultural, and religious rights as well as modernizing their community. Another legacy of this period was the emergence of the first Azeri revolutionary organizations like Himmat and Difai, which were a source of concern for the viceroyalty.

However, the main fears of the viceroyalty about the Azeris had roots in the neighbouring Muslim empires. When their nascent revolutionary organizations were crushed, they found two excellent training grounds in the Persian and Ottoman constitutional movements. This ongoing revolutionary experience and the increased interaction of the Azeri intelligentsia with their Persian and Ottoman counterparts were adding to the fears of the Russian officials. Soon, the top-level Tsarist bureaucracy was getting more and more anxious about an empire-wide problem among the Russian Muslims: the pan-Islamist movement.

From 1910 onward, the Tsarist perception of the pan-Islamist threat, believed to be directed by the Ottoman government with the aim of turning the Russian Muslims against Russia, grew exponentially. Being a border region, the South Caucasus was considered by the central government and viceroyalty to be overrun by the pan-Islamist emissaries who were preaching anti-Russian propaganda among the Azeris. By 1912, the increasingly politicized Azeris were now a part of the Muslim political movement in the Russian Empire and the Ottoman-led pan-Islamist threat. Because of their numbers, emerging national identity, and the existence of neighbouring Muslim empires, they were now the most potentially troublesome nationality in the South Caucasus, complicating both internal and external interests of the Russian Empire.

Given the nature of the relations between the viceroyalty and the Georgians and Azeris, the Tsarist Armenians were gradually seen in a more positive light by the Russian administration, which needed allies in this turbulent region. Between 1907 and 1910, the regime had dealt with the Armenian national movement by rearranging of the Armenian

Church and the trial of the Dashnaktsutiun. The remaining pillar of Armenian political life was the Armenian bourgeoisie, who wanted to take the lead in Armenian affairs in the region, the articulation to the new environment was not a difficult feat as their interests coincided with those of the Tsarist regime in the region. Once the 'unwanted Dashnak tutelage' was gone, the Armenian bourgeoisie, composed mainly of merchants, urban professionals, and industrialists, filled the political void among the Russian Armenians with the encouragement of the viceroyalty.⁷⁵⁸

This conservative and practical group, as the viceroy saw them, was also compatible with the viceroy's economic policies in the region, which called for the elimination of the labour movement and attraction of more capital into the naturally rich region. The Armenian urban element, with its commercial and financial links both domestically and internationally, fitted the bill. When the expansion of the banks and commercialization of agriculture began, the Armenian bourgeoisie benefitted more than its Georgian and Azeri rivals. Therefore, this political rapprochement paid off economically.

Soon, rising economic fortunes and good relations with the Tsarist administration helped the Armenian bourgeoisie improve its position in local politics, which were used to further their interests and address the demands of the Russian Armenians. Apart from the cities with predominantly Armenian population, the Armenian bourgeoisie was consolidating its influence on the City Dumas in Tiflis and Baku. The cordial relations of the Tiflis mayor, Khatisian, with the viceroyalty epitomized how the relations evolved from 1907 to 1912. Not only was he considered a useful figure for the Armenian loyalties for the Russian rule, his sympathies for the Dashnaktsutiun did not vex the viceroy, who considered the Armenian discontent against the Tsarist policies between 1903 and 1907 understandable in some aspects.

By 1912, the Armenian bourgeoisie was the leading political and economic force among the Russian Armenians and became more influential in cultural matters through its role in the press and its financial support for Armenian schooling. Given the Muslim numerical superiority and the scattered Armenian population in the region, coupled with the

⁷⁵⁸ Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism*, 55.

favourable results of the understanding with the viceroyalty, the Armenian bourgeoisie and the Armenians in general did not harbour separatist sentiments toward Russian rule in the South Caucasus according the viceroy. Along with the tamed Armenian Church, they provided the viceroyalty solid allies in this difficult region. Until 1912, this alliance yielded benefits to both parties in the domestic arena but with the complications in the Ottoman Empire that year, it would also prove to be a key dimension in Russian foreign policy for the Ottoman Armenians.

CHAPTER 5

RUSSIA AS THE PATRON AND DEFENDER OF ARMENIANS: THE QUESTION OF ARMENIAN REFORMS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND ITS ARMENIAN SUBJECTS (1912-1914)

Introduction

In early October 1912, the representatives of Armenian charitable and cultural institutions, the Armenian press and some other Armenian circles in Tiflis gathered in the diocesan building. What brought them there was their common concern for worsening conditions of the Ottoman Armenians, whose fate became even more uncertain with the declining fortunes of the Ottoman Empire. The Armenians of Tiflis already knew about their hardships and how Patriarch Arsharuni's complaints to the Porte did not bear any fruit. Trusting in the improved relations between the Russian Armenians and the Russian administration, the representatives decided to hand the Catholicos a petition asking for help from the Tsar for the Ottoman Armenians, who 'always looked up to Russia with hope as a patron and defender of all oppressed Christians in the East.'⁷⁵⁹ A few days later, the First Balkan War broke out and brought a new dimension to the relations between the Russian government and its Armenian subjects.

From 1903 to 1912, the evolution of the relations between the Russian administration and the political pillars of the Russian Armenians was chiefly based on the priorities of the domestic policy. This was understandable as the region was a wreck hit by the revolution and national animosities with inefficient Tsarist bureaucracy. By the end of the Dashnak trial in 1912, the party organization was decimated in the South Caucasus and its affiliates within the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie were mostly

⁷⁵⁹ 'Po povodu zverstv v Turtsii,' *Tiflisskii listok*, 22 September 1912 [5 October 1912].

weeded out. The reconfigured Armenian Church, with a regime-friendly Catholicos at his head, was at the disposal of Russia.

The Armenian bourgeoisie was thriving both economically and politically owing to its understanding with the viceroyalty. Unlike their neighbours, Georgians and Azeris, among the Russian Armenians, no serious political agent with anti-government agenda remained in 1912. Improved relations with its Armenian subjects facilitated Tsarist recovery in the South Caucasus. As the Ottoman Empire's future became uncertain after successive defeats, these cordial relations would also be relevant for the Russian foreign policy interests.

In the aftermath of the revolution of 1905, the primary concern of the central government was to maintain domestic stability. After the humiliating defeat at the hands of the Japanese and the turmoil created by the revolution, this was a sensible thing to do. As the recovery continued, Stolypin's insistence on the maintenance of internal economic and political development and avoidance of major international conflicts brought about a balanced approach in foreign policy, which would be bolstered by the appointment of Stolypin's brother-in-law, Sazonov as the Foreign Minister.

True, there were times when the Russians were talking about a possible war with the Ottomans in 1908 or they actually intervened in the Persian Empire for the Shah against the constitutionalists to protect Russian interests in northern Persia. However, the former idea was dismissed after deliberations and in the latter case; some Cossack brigades were enough to do the trick.⁷⁶⁰ Aware of the situation of the army and the navy, the main actors of the Russian foreign policy knew that they had to avoid major confrontations.

In the strategic planning of the Russian military in 1910, the Japanese front was considered the biggest military threat. Two years later it was replaced with Europe and the Near East as the empire's weakest positions.⁷⁶¹ The assassination of Stolypin in September 1911 and the start of the Ottoman-Italian war began to change the picture. As

⁷⁶⁰ 'Pisma I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkova Nikolaiu Romanovu (1905-1915 gg.),' *KA* 26 (1928): 98-111; Alan Bodger, 'Russia and the End of the Ottoman Empire,' in *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Marian Kent (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 87; Anatolii V. Ignatev, *Vneshniaia politika Rossii, 1907-1914. Tendentsii, liudi, sobytiia* (Moscow: Nauka, 2000), 66-7.

⁷⁶¹ William C. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 433-34.

the Ottoman forces were losing against the Italians, the closure of the Straits in April and May 1912 added to the fears of not only the Russian military planners but also the Russian commercial circles. Although the fall in the trade surplus in 1912 was mainly caused by bad harvests (demonstrated by the differentials between the grain and non-grain exports), some statesmen and the public believed that it was primarily the closure of the Straits. Coupled with the fears of a possible German control of the Straits, Russia declared that it could accept neither the closure nor the domination of the Straits by another Great Power.⁷⁶²

Soon after hostilities with the Italians ended, another conflict broke out in the Balkans in the fall of 1912. By then, the main priority of the Russian foreign policy on the Ottoman Empire was again about the Straits, for which the Russian preference was the control of the Straits by a weak Ottoman Empire—a continuation of its policy in the nineteenth century.⁷⁶³ However, the Ottoman army's defeats signalled that the control of the Straits could be lost. There was a panic moment in Russian diplomatic circles when the Bulgarian army was marching to Istanbul and the Russian ambassador in Istanbul, Mikhail N. Girs, was given the authority to call the Russian Black Sea fleet to prevent a possible Bulgarian occupation of the city.⁷⁶⁴

The Ottoman army went on losing and this made the total collapse of Ottoman Empire a real possibility in the eyes of the Russians. Various reports from top-level Russian bureaucracy, with varying tones of optimism, pointed out that in such an eventuality, Russia had to be ready with its army and Black Sea fleet. However, in most of these reports, it was stressed that Russia was not ready to pick up its fair share of the spoils of the Ottoman Empire if it disintegrated.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶² Derek W. Spring, 'Russian Foreign Policy, Economic Interests and the Straits Question, 1905-1914,' in *New Perspectives in Modern Russian History*, ed. Robert B. McKean (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 215-19.

⁷⁶³ George Zotiades, 'Russia and the Question of the Straits and Constantinople during the Balkan Wars,' *Balkan Studies* 2, no. 2 (1970): 293; A. S. Avetian, *Russko-germanskiiye diplomaticheskie otnosheniia nakanune pervoi mirovoi voiny 1910-1914* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985), 224; Ronald Bobroff, *Roads to Glory: Late Imperial Russia and the Turkish Straits* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 37-41.

⁷⁶⁴ Bobroff, *Roads to Glory*, 37-41, 52-4; Elena G. Kostrikova, 'Borba Rossii za peresmotr statusa Prolivov v nachale XX v.,' in *Rossii i Chernomorskie prolivy: XVII-XX stoletii*, eds. Leonid N. Nezhinskii and Anatolii V. Ignatev (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnaia otnosheniia, 1999), 287.

⁷⁶⁵ Iakov M. Zakher, 'Konstantinopol i prolivy,' *KA* 6 (1924): 66-8; Zotiades, 288-90.

Russia was not ready militarily but the possibility of an Ottoman collapse forced them to be more active regarding the Ottoman Empire. One way of doing this was to address the grievances of the Ottoman Armenians, for which Russia remained generally indifferent since the Berlin Congress. As the successive wars of the Ottomans waging were complicating the situation of the Ottoman Armenians, the opportunity presented itself when the representatives of Russian Armenians, mainly the members of the Armenian bourgeoisie, began to appeal to the Catholicos to ask for active Russian support for their co-religionists across the border. Soon, Russia emerged as the main supporter for the Armenian reforms in the Ottoman Empire, which became the dominant factor in the relations between Russia and its Armenian subjects. Aside from cultural and economic demands, these main reforms in question were mostly administrative that called for increased Armenian representation in local administration, the appointment of a general-governor selected by the great powers, reorganization of the gendarmerie by European officers and the supervision of the reforms by the Great Powers.

From the Initiation of the Armenian Reforms until the End of the First Balkan War (September 1912- May 1913)

Russia and the Revival of the Armenian Question

Why in late 1912 did Russia show such an interest in the Armenian reforms, for which it had been quite unenthusiastic for so long? Unquestionably, it was not for the humanitarian reasons that the secretary at the Russian Embassy, Andre N. Mandelshtam, pointed out.⁷⁶⁶ Many scholars described this angle of the Russian foreign policy as a means for its territorial expansion in Eastern Anatolia. In other words, Russia's support was a disguise for outright annexation of Ottoman Armenia when the Balkan Wars

⁷⁶⁶ Mandelshtam, 244.

created a suitable condition.⁷⁶⁷ Other scholars like Kirakosian argued that the Russian project for reform was envisioning an autonomous Armenian under Russian protectorate, which would be also in line with the expansionist aims of Russia in the Near East.⁷⁶⁸

During the initiation of the Armenian reforms in late 1912, however, the Russian correspondence with the Armenian political leaders and the Catholicos, as well as interdepartmental Russian correspondence demonstrate a rather cautious approach instead of an aggressive one. A more active line as far as occupation could only be possible if the Ottoman Empire collapsed, which the Russian foreign policy did not favour by late 1912. Ideally, for Russian foreign policy interests, the Ottoman Empire needed to hold on until Russia was militarily ready to compete for the spoils of its demise.

Instead of an aggressive strategy eyeing for occupation or the creation of a Russian protectorate, the Russians were investing in the Armenian question for its domestic and international interests which could help them whether the Ottoman collapse became a reality or not. With the diplomatic support they gave for the reform project, the Russians would consolidate the sympathies of the Ottoman Armenians and solidify its good relations with the Russian Armenians.

On the other hand, Germany was considered by the Russians to be in a more convenient position to benefit from a possible Ottoman breakdown owing to their increased influence on the Ottoman Empire in the last decade. Even if the Ottoman Empire survived, its transformation into a feeble state that was actually controlled by Germany was very undesirable for Russia. The German interest in Eastern Anatolia as well in Persia had already been complicating Russian interests. This became more intense after the Potsdam agreement of 1911, which allowed for an extension of the Berlin-Baghdad railway to

⁷⁶⁷ Particularly, Soviet scholars unanimously supported this view. Akopian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 163-5; Avetian, *Russko-germanskiiye diplomaticheskie otnosheniia*, 234-36; Ervand K. Sarkisian, 'Armianskii vopros i Rossiia v 1912-1914,' *Patma-banasirakan handes*, no. 1 (1995): 111. Other scholars and politicians shared this view. Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 24-25. Somakian, 46-9; 78; Halil Menteşe, *Osmanlı Mebusan Meclisi Reisi Halil Menteşe'nin Anıları*, ed. Ismail Arar (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1986), 174.

⁷⁶⁸ Dzhan Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia v gody pervoi mirovoi voyny* (Erevan: Izdatelstvo Erivanskogo universiteta, 1971), 127-28. Interestingly enough, this view was shared by Talat Pasha for different reasons. In his memoirs, Talat Pasha argued that that Russia was trying to set up an autonomous Armenia to block possible unification attempts of Anatolian and Caucasian Muslims. Talat Paşa, *Talat Paşa'nın Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Yenigün Haber Ajansı ve Yayıncılık, 1998), 21.

Tehran and increased German expansion in the Ottoman Empire, which had crucial commercial links with the Persian Empire as the fourth biggest importer of Persian goods.⁷⁶⁹ With the Ottoman defeats in the First Balkan War, the Russian fears were aggravated as they believed that the German influence on the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire would also grow. On top of the German presence in Persia, this was a serious threat for Russian interests in the South Caucasus.⁷⁷⁰ The Russian role in the Armenian reforms was a means to prevent this.

Another key aspect of Russian policy towards the Armenian reforms was about its own relations with the Russian Armenians and how the complications in Eastern Anatolia could affect them. The First Balkan War required the transfer of some of the Ottoman army corps to the front, which added to lack of security in the region. Both St. Petersburg and Tiflis were worried that a revolutionary uprising among the Ottoman Armenians could spread to the South Caucasus and threaten the stability they obtained with much difficulty.⁷⁷¹

From the starting point of the revival of the Armenian question in 1912, the Russian authorities, particularly Sazonov, repeatedly stressed the importance of this link and noted that Russia would not remain indifferent to such a situation and would intervene militarily. By maintaining such a position, the Russian authorities had two aims in mind. Not only did they seem to care for the Ottoman Armenians and gain their sympathies, they would also strengthen their improved relations with the Russian Armenians, who would appreciate the Russian support for their brethren.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁹ İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Alman Nüfuzu* (Istanbul: Kaynak, 1983), 35.

⁷⁷⁰ 'Pisma I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkova Nikolaiu Romanovu (1905-1915 gg.),' *KA* 26 (1928): 117-20; Richard G. Hovannisian, 'The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1914,' in *Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 2, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 233-34; Lazarev, 243; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 72-3.

⁷⁷¹ Sazonov, *Fateful Years*, 141; Hovannisian, 'The Armenian Question in the Ottoman Empire,' 233-34; Lazarev, 242; Mandelshtam, 243.

⁷⁷² Stepan Stepanian, *Armeniiia v politike imperialisticheskoi Germanii: (konets XIX - nachalo XX veka)* (Erevan: Aiastan, 1975), 91-2; Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 31; Davison, 487.

The Role of the Armenian Church and the Russian Armenian Bourgeoisie in Russia's Interest in the Revival of the Armenian Question in Late 1912

Not noted for his interest in political matters before his election as the Catholicos, Kevork V became a pivotal figure in the initiation of the Armenian reform process.⁷⁷³ Concerned about the situation of the Ottoman Armenians, the Catholicos had already spoken to the Russian press about it when he was in the capital for his obligatory visit to the Tsar in June 1912.⁷⁷⁴ In the meantime, several petitions from the Ottoman Armenians as well as the Armenians from other parts of the world kept coming to the Catholicos that urged him to demand support from Russia for the Ottoman Armenians.⁷⁷⁵

The most critical petitions came from the Ottoman Armenians. Having failed with their complaints to the Porte, the Armenian Patriarchate and the Armenian National Assembly in Istanbul directed their petitions to Echmiadzin. A report from Patriarch Arsharuni in September epitomizes the general mood of these complaints. According to the Patriarch, the situation of the Ottoman Armenians had not improved since 1908 and particularly the Armenians in the provincial regions were in a wretched condition. He asked the Catholicos to do whatever he could do to stop this 'systematic persecution.'⁷⁷⁶

Content with the general state of affairs in the South Caucasus, prominent members of the Russian Armenian bourgeoisie were getting anxious about the condition of the Ottoman Armenians, especially after the start of the First Balkan War. The newspapers, echoing the views of the Armenian bourgeoisie, were also focusing on the conditions of the Ottoman Armenians and Russia's responsibility for them. The Armenians of Tiflis were outraged by the news and soon their concerns were conveyed to the Catholicos with

⁷⁷³ Esat Uras, *The Armenians in History and the Armenian Question* (Istanbul: Documentary Publications, 1988), 626.

⁷⁷⁴ Bayur, vol. 2, pt. 3, 22-3.

⁷⁷⁵ Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 121.

⁷⁷⁶ Patriarch Archbishop Arsharuni to Catholicos, 4 September 1912 [17 September 1912], doc. no. 108 in Nersisian, *Genotsid armian*, 230.

a petition by the editor of *Mshak*, Arakeliants, and chairman of the Armenian Benevolence Society in the Caucasus, Samson Arutiunian.⁷⁷⁷

The Catholicos immediately wrote to Vorontsov-Dashkov about this. Describing the hopeless situation that the letters from Istanbul depicted, Kevork V informed the viceroy that what they were asking from the Russian people and the Tsar was ‘defence and patronage.’ Appealing to ‘the defender of the Christians of the East,’ the Catholicos added that the Russian Armenians were also expecting assistance from the Russian government for the Ottoman Armenians as they had done to the Christians in the Balkans.⁷⁷⁸

The tone of urgency in the letter of Kevork V gave the viceroy a lot to think about. Summarizing the relations between the Russian government and its Armenian subjects since the time of Peter the Great, the viceroy highlighted the importance of the Armenians to Russia in a letter to Nicholas II. Describing how he turned around the government’s poor relations with the Russian Armenians after his arrival in 1905, Vorontsov-Dashkov assured the Tsar of the loyalty of its Armenian subjects. Moreover, the viceroy emphasized the growing Russian influence on the Ottoman Armenians, most of whom believed that ‘only Russia could protect their lives, honour and the properties from the brutalities of the Kurds. It was time to go back to the traditional Russian policy of protecting the Turkish Armenians.’ Such a diplomatic act would augment the loyalty of Russian Armenians to their Tsar, ‘under whose aegis they would sincerely express gratefulness of the entire Armenian nation.’⁷⁷⁹

The viceroy believed that if the initiative for the protection of the Ottoman Armenians was taken by another great power, then the Russian prestige among the Christians in Asia Minor would suffer. A Russian initiative would attract the sympathies of the Ottoman Armenians, which inevitably would facilitate their assistance to Russian military operations in the region. However, any implications of dismemberment of the Ottoman

⁷⁷⁷ ‘Po povodu zverstv v Turtsii,’ *Tiflisskii listok*, 22 September 1912 [5 October 1912].

⁷⁷⁸ The Appeal of the Representatives of Erevan Armenian Charitable and Cultural Representatives to Kevork V, 25 September 1912 [8 October 1912], doc. no. 110, Nersisian, *Genotsid armian*, 110; Kevork V to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 2 October 1912 [15 October 1912], doc. no. 111, in *ibid*.

⁷⁷⁹ ‘Pisma I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkova Nikolaiu Romanovu (1905-1915 gg.),’ 118-19.

Empire had to be avoided because annexing the region called Turkish Armenia, ‘which was in fact inhabited by the wild Kurds, could be only harmful for them [Russia] by creating a huge concern for governing a country with a fanatic population who were inimical among themselves.’⁷⁸⁰ Nicholas II agreed with the suggestion by the viceroy ‘regarding the desirability of the defence of the Turkish Armenians’ and fully approved the proposal that ‘the first initiative of this defence should come from the Russian government.’⁷⁸¹ However, it had to wait until the end of the conflict in the Balkans since it would yield no benefits when the Ottomans were being defeated.’⁷⁸²

The meeting of the representatives of the Ottoman Armenians with Girs in mid-November also helped shape the Russian urgency on the matter. An influential Armenian deputy, Krikor Zohrab, and Mardikian visited Girs, to whom they claimed to talk as the representatives of the ‘Armenian Patriarchate and the Armenian nation.’ They believed that ‘they saw no way out other than appealing to the only state, which could save them from the terrible situation the Ottoman Armenians were enduring.’ According to them, only radical measures like permanent Russian occupation of the Armenian provinces like what Austria-Hungary did to the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 could remedy the situation. Apparently, all the Armenian parties were in solidarity for such a solution. Afterwards, these views were confirmed to Girs by the Patriarch, who asked for intervention of the Tsar on behalf of the Armenians.⁷⁸³ The Patriarch’s statement also highlighted that Kevork V had a high prestige among the Ottoman Armenians. This was music to the ears of the Russians, who could use the Catholicos’ influence to their advantage.⁷⁸⁴

As the defeats in the Balkan Wars went on, the situation in Eastern Anatolia was worsening. Evgeni E. Vyshinskii, the military agent of the Russian consulate at Erzurum, after his travels in Eastern Anatolia wrote in November 1912 that the situation was chaotic and Russia had to act. Claiming that ‘annexation to Russia was the constant

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., 119-120.

⁷⁸¹ Kokovtsov to Sazonov, 31 October 1912 [13 November 1912], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 2-3.

⁷⁸² Ibid.; Avagyan, 122.

⁷⁸³ Girs to Sazonov, 26 November 1912 [9 December 1912], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, ll. 8 ob-9. A slightly abridged version of this document can be found in Nersisian, *Genotsid arмян*, 239-42.

⁷⁸⁴ GARF, f. 579, o. 1, d. 1863, l. 4ob.

dream of all Turkish Armenians,' he noted that the solution to the Armenian question was either a Russian occupation or a reform project primarily supervised by Russia.⁷⁸⁵

Meanwhile, growing pro-Russian sentiment among the Ottoman Armenians was reported by Girs and the Russian diplomatic corps in Eastern Anatolia. For instance, a dispatch from the vice-consul in Van stated that 'all Armenians were now on the side of Russia, as they sincerely wished the advent of our troops or reform under the control of Russia.'⁷⁸⁶ Another from Bayezid read: 'Armenians, without distinction of party, are very hostile to Turkey in their relations and very much wish a Russian protectorate and Russian occupation of Armenia.'⁷⁸⁷ Girs also approved of Vorontsov-Dashkov's proposal on going back to the traditional policy of protection but Russia had to act fast not to lose the leading role. What needed to be done was to assure the Catholicos and the Armenian Patriarch that Russia could play the role of protector when needed.⁷⁸⁸ Although Girs saw a possible Russian annexation of the Armenian provinces 'premature,' he warned that if the reforms did not yield the expected results, 'they should be ready for the possibility of their troops entering into the region.'⁷⁸⁹

More cautious than his ambassador, Sazonov was aware of the state of affairs in Eastern Anatolia and how explosive it could be for Russian interests, especially given the Balkan conflict. However, to make the Armenian question an item of debate at that time would not produce the desired results.⁷⁹⁰ For Sazonov, an active Russian intervention or 'even armed occupation of Asia Minor' did not correspond to the current aims of the Russian government and that was why nothing other than general assurances could be given to the Armenian clergy and representatives.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁵ Sarkisian, 'Armianskii vopros i Rossiia v 1912-1914,' 114-5.

⁷⁸⁶ Girs to Sazonov, 26 November 1912 [9 December 1912], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, ll. 9-9 ob; Sarkisian, *Politika osmanskogo pravitelstva*, 290.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁸ Girs to Sazonov, 26 November 1912 [9 December 1912], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, ll. 8-10; Sarkisian, *Politika osmanskogo pravitelstva*, 290; Somakian, 58.

⁷⁸⁹ Girs to Sazonov; 26 November 1912 [9 December 1912], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, l. 10 ob.

⁷⁹⁰ Sazonov to Girs, 30 November 1912 [13 December 1912], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, ll. 11-12 ob.

⁷⁹¹ Sazonov to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 4 December 1912 [17 December 1912], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, ll. 13 ob-14.

Having received the Russian promise of support, the Catholicos led the Russian Armenian effort for the Armenian reforms. The Armenian National Bureau (established in Tiflis in October 1912 under the auspices of the Catholicos) held a meeting to finalize its aims. Encouraged by the viceroy, the Armenian National Bureau would be responsible for assisting the Catholicos for the Armenian reforms, coordinating various Armenian bodies, especially those in Istanbul, and carrying out propaganda in the Russian public and official circles.⁷⁹² Among its members were Mayor Khatisian, the newly released Dashnak poet Tumanian, and the editor of *Mshak*, Arakelian.

From the 1890s on, in addition to the publications of the Armenian political groups, like *Pro-Armenia* of the Dashnaks, there were societies in Britain and France, such as the Friends of Armenia and the Armenian United Association of London, which constantly propagated for the need for reforms for the Ottoman Armenians. Although the consulates of the Western European powers in Eastern Anatolia were aware of the problems in the region, they were not interested in pursuing a proactive policy regarding the Armenian question until 1912 when a renewed interest in the question in Europe emerged, both officially and publicly.⁷⁹³

To benefit from this renewed European interest in the Armenian cause, an Armenian National Delegation was formed to coordinate the Armenian efforts in Europe. Boghos Nubar Pasha, the wealthy son of a well-known Prime Minister in Egypt and the founder of the Armenian General Benevolence Union, was proposed by the Catholicos to lead the Armenian National Delegation and he took up the job in December 1912. His contacts in Europe and his popularity among the Armenians made him an ideal candidate. Accompanied by prominent Armenian personalities in Europe, Boghos Nubar Pasha started his work in the European circles.

⁷⁹² Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 32; Kevorkian, 155; Tunian, *Rossiia i Armianskii vopros*, 188; Walker, *The Survival of a Nation*, 78-9.

⁷⁹³ Joseph Heller, *British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1983), 82-3.

The repeated appeals for help kept coming to the viceroy from the Catholicos in December 1912.⁷⁹⁴ Sazonov, as a reply to Catholicos, wrote to the viceroy that the Russian government was aware of the misery of the Ottoman Armenians caused by the Kurdish oppression and the lack of personal and property security. The Russian government was working out solutions to these problems; however, the timing was not opportune for a more active policy. Sazonov made it clear that there was no concert among the Great Powers on the Armenian question and any active interference in the midst of the Balkan conflict could create more complications. Under these circumstances, Sazonov asked the Armenians to be very cautious and stay united and not to intricate Russian policies.⁷⁹⁵ Reiterating Sazonov's words, Vorontsov-Dashkov asked the Catholicos to use his authority on his flock to prevent any unrest and reminded him that 'the European powers would not give Armenians anything and they had to tie their hopes to Russia.'⁷⁹⁶

As for the increasing number of petitions requesting various forms of Russian support for the Ottoman Armenians, the Russian diplomatic corps abroad were instructed in a circular by Sazonov to respond with a uniform response: 'Traditionally favourable toward the Armenian people, Russia now closely undertakes their interests to the heart. Russia is ready to render them all possible assistance, allowing itself to choose the most fitting time and means to advance the issue of betterment of life and security of the Armenians living in Turkey.'⁷⁹⁷

These words of caution did not stop the Catholicos. He immediately wrote to the viceroy repeating the Ottoman Armenians' situation and the need of immediate action by Russia. In the words of Catholicos, 'the Armenian question was put into solution by the European diplomacy 34 years ago, but until now it remained unsatisfactory. If Armenians were ignored now, then this would be a sign of the absolute extermination of the whole

⁷⁹⁴ Catholicos to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 5 December 1912 [18 December 1912], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, ll. 16-16 ob.

⁷⁹⁵ Sazonov to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 18 December 1912 [31 December 1912], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, ll. 20-20 ob; Vorontsov-Dashkov to Catholicos, 22 December 1912 [4 January 1913], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, ll. 22-24 ob.

⁷⁹⁶ Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 131-32.

⁷⁹⁷ Circular from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 19 December 1912 [1 January 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 23-4; Nina S. Kiniapina, ed., *Vostochnyi vopros vo vneshnei politike Rossii: konets XVIII-nachalo XX v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 369.

nation.’⁷⁹⁸ Another delegation composed of prominent Armenians (Khatisian, Samson Arutiunian, and Archbishop Mesrop, the rector of the Ecclesiastical Academy) was instructed by Kevork V to give the viceroy the petition of the Russian Armenians.⁷⁹⁹ ‘A sort of Russian protectorate over Turkish Armenia, not in the form of occupation by the Russian troops’ was suggested by the delegation as a solution to the current situation.⁸⁰⁰ The Catholicos repeatedly considered presenting his case to the Tsar himself, but this was refused, possibly as part of cautious Russian policy at the time.⁸⁰¹

The Catholicos was assured of active Russian help in this matter. In return, he was asked by the viceroy to tell Boghos Nubar Pasha to create ‘a favourable mood in which the sponsorship of Armenian reforms would be reserved for Russia.’⁸⁰² In line with the cautious policy that Sazonov spoke of earlier, the Catholicos complied and instructed Boghos Nubar Pasha not to participate in the ambassadors’ conference in London and to limit his activities to propagating about the need to implement the reforms under Russian control in European political circles.⁸⁰³

Leaving the foreign policy aspect aside, the situation across the border put the viceroy in a difficult position domestically given the demands of the Catholicos and the Russian Armenian bourgeoisie. After the visit by the delegation, the viceroy informed Sazonov that the Armenians unanimously did not believe in the promises of reforms made by the Ottoman government. Both Russian and Ottoman Armenians held the view that ‘the only salvation for the Ottoman Armenians could be obtained if the initiative, as well as the control of the Armenian reforms, came exclusively from Russia.’ However, the viceroy warned that there was an impression among the Armenians that the Russian government

⁷⁹⁸ Catholicos to Nicholas II, 24 December 1912 [6 January 1913], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, ll. 25-7.

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid., ll. 28-9.

⁸⁰⁰ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 2 January 1913 [15 January 1913], GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 14 (obshch.), ll. 80-80 ob.

⁸⁰¹ ‘Pisma I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkova Nikolaiu Romanovu (1905-1915 gg.),’ 118; Vorontsov-Dashkov to Kokovtsov, 1 January 1913 [14 January 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 11-11 ob; Vorontsov-Dashkov to Sazonov, 1 January 1913 [14 January 1913], ibid., ll. 12-14 ob; Kokovtsov to Sazonov, 22 January 1913 [4 February 1913], ibid., ll. 20-20 ob; Kokovtsov to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 22 January 1913 [4 February 1913], ibid., ll. 21-21 ob.

⁸⁰² Somakian, 58.

⁸⁰³ Catholicos to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 15 January 1913 [28 January 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 37 ob-38; Vorontsov-Dashkov to Sazonov, 7 February 1913 [20 February 1913], doc. no. 12, *Reformy v Armenii*, 22; Tunian, *Rossiia i Armianskii vopros*, 194.

was not taking decisive steps about it and quite soon it would be impossible to stall their demands by usual promises of patronage of the Ottoman Armenians without any real indicators.⁸⁰⁴ Nevertheless, consistent with their earlier attitude, Nicholas II and Sazonov restated the necessity of waiting until the conclusion of the conflict in the Balkans.⁸⁰⁵

In the meantime, two delegations from Russia were sent to Istanbul to find out the attitude of the Ottoman Armenians. One of them was the delegation of the St. Petersburg Armenian Society, which held various meetings with the representatives of the Armenian political parties, the Armenian Patriarchate, and public figures.⁸⁰⁶ Their main impression was that a more active Russian involvement was demanded by all parties although their preferred terms of action varied. For example, the former Patriarch, Ormanian, believed that an autonomous Armenia in the form of Lebanon would be the best option while Russian occupation was not undesirable considering the decent condition of the Russian Armenians.⁸⁰⁷ At about the same time, another Russian delegation was in Istanbul. Among the members of this delegation were Miliukov, Guchkov, Papadzhianov and Adonts. Miliukov, who had earlier declared in the State Duma that Russia could not stay indifferent to the misery of the Ottoman Armenians as it did in 1896, believed that the Ottoman Armenians were trying to demonstrate to Russia that they had no separatist tendencies and only aspired to the security and enlightenment of the Russian Armenians.⁸⁰⁸

From late 1912 on, the Russian interest in the Ottoman Armenians grew in line with the Armenian demands. Instructed by St. Petersburg, the viceroyalty assured the Catholicos and the representatives of the Russian Armenian bourgeoisie that Russia would support the Ottoman Armenians but this had to wait until the end of the hostilities in the Balkans. Grateful for the Russian support, the Catholicos and the Armenian National Bureau was told to act prudently to avoid any complications. In the meantime, among the Ottoman

⁸⁰⁴ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Sazonov, 6 January 1913 [19 January 1913], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, ll. 33-5.

⁸⁰⁵ Kokovtsov to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 17 January 1913 [30 January 1913], SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 140, l. 39; Kokovtsov to Sazonov, 22 January 1913 [4 February 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 20-20 ob.

⁸⁰⁶ For the Armenian question in Turkey, GARF, f. 579, o. 1, d. 1863, l. 2.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid., ll. 12ob, 13. This was a reference to the autonomous status of the Mount Lebanon district (established in 1861) within the Ottoman Empire.

⁸⁰⁸ 'P.N. Miliukov ob armianakh,' *Zakavkazkaia rech*, 23 December 1912 [5 January 1913]; Kirakossian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 72; Sertçelik, 292-3.

Armenians, the sympathies for Russia were also growing due to the support they were willing to provide, which also helped to solidify the good relations of the Russian administration with its own Armenians.⁸⁰⁹ While the positions of the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie were quite obvious, the case of the Dashnaks was a more complicated one in this new course.

The Attitude of the Dashnaks toward Russia during the Revival of the Armenian Question

In the last months of 1912, when the Armenian reforms were being brought up again by Russia, the Dashnaks were in a critical state. They had lost their hopes for the Persian constitutional movement and became less active in Persian politics.⁸¹⁰ In the Ottoman Empire, their alliance with the CUP officially ended in summer 1912 since the Dashnaks' demands for reform had not been met. The Ottoman opposition parties were not to their taste either but they had sincere doubts about a feasible collaboration with the CUP in the future.⁸¹¹

In the Russian Empire, their organization was cracked down during the trial process. However, the curious end of their trial was followed by changes in the international situation, which in turn, would be instrumental in the change in Russian foreign policy regarding the Armenian question, as well as its possible implications on the Russian Armenians. The Russian initiative on the Armenian reforms put the Dashnaksutun in a tough spot. This was the same government that destroyed its organization in the South Caucasus and put many of its members to prison a few years earlier. Nevertheless, the way the trial ended was being interpreted as a watershed for better relations with Russia.

⁸⁰⁹ This was also observed by the British diplomats. Kirakossian, *British Diplomacy and the Armenian Question*, 314.

⁸¹⁰ Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911*, 185.

⁸¹¹ Kaligian, 136-7; Dasnabedian, 100-1.

Acknowledging the dire condition of the Ottoman Armenians, the party had doubts, quite understandably, concerning the nature of Russian intentions and their possible consequences. In principle, the Dashnaks were supporting the Armenian reforms, which they believed to be an improvement. Therefore, they agreed to act in solidarity with the other Armenian political parties to facilitate the reform process.⁸¹² The Dashnaks also appealed to the Catholicos to ask for Russian support for the Ottoman Armenians. In this delicate period, the Dashnaks were cautious not to irritate Russia, despite some of their members' scepticism about Russian intentions. In the end, it was decided not to carry out any action against the Russian authorities.⁸¹³

The change of relations between the party and Russia was remarkable. At individual level, the influential members of the Dashnak intelligentsia, such as poet Tumanian, were the epitomes of this change of heart. Tumanian was included in the Dashnak trial, sat in prison and finally was acquitted in the final session of the trial. However, a few months after his release, Tumanian portrayed Russia as the saviour of the Armenian people on the pages of *Orizon*, the organ of the Eastern Bureau of the Dashnaks.

In an article in October 1912, he elaborated on the reasons for a Russian intervention on behalf of the Ottoman Armenians. Tumanian believed that for Russia, Armenians were 'the faithful vanguards' and apart from the cold relations in the last three decades, Russian-Armenian relations were good and in the future it would be the same. In the Russian Empire, for Tumanian, the Armenians 'lived under the influence of the best people in the world, under the aegis of the best literature. Turkish Armenia was one of the closest spheres of influence of only Russia, which as in the past had wished to put an end to the difficult situation as it did at the moment.' To the critics of Russia, who asserted that Russia was doing this for its own interests, Tumanian stated that 'it was even better that the interests of a strong Russia and Armenian people coincided.' This was why Russia would help the Ottoman Armenians and this was why all his 'hopes and

⁸¹² Dasnabedian, 101.

⁸¹³ DP OO to the Head of the Secret Service in Turkey, 25 October 1912 [7 November 1912], f. 529, o.1, d. 7, ll. 213-214 ob; Kaligian, 151.

sympathies were tied to Russia.⁸¹⁴ In another article, he argued that Armenians were the victims of rivalry among the European states as they tried to obstruct Russia's expansion to the Near East. 'Historical circumstances demonstrated that the Armenian people had to be with the Russian people and had to tie all its hopes to the success of the Russian state' since the European powers would defend the Ottoman Empire against Russia, thereby blocking the fair solution to the Armenian question.⁸¹⁵

According to a police report in November 1912, considering Russia as the only hope for the Ottoman Armenians, the Dashnaksutun gradually moved away from terror and ordered its committees to 'hold even joint operations with other Russian revolutionary parties' until the Catholicos' petition was answered.⁸¹⁶ One of the founders of the party, Simon Zavarian, in his letter to Tumanian recommended stopping party activity against Russia at the moment and pointed out the need to attract the attention of the Russian government and society to the necessity of active defence of the Turkish Armenians.' According to the reports, this was approved by Tumanian and 'met with great sympathy among the Armenian society.'⁸¹⁷

In a party meeting in Istanbul in December 1912, party members were told not to get involved in activities against Russia since it responded to the demands of the Catholicos and began to act for the reforms. Although there were some anti-Russian speeches in the meeting, the main sentiment was that of sympathy toward Russia. Zavarian again spoke of 'the sincere intentions' of the Russian government and if the Russians kept their promises of support, then 'the Armenians would decorate not only their homes but also their churches with the portraits of the Tsar and the current ministers.'⁸¹⁸ In the meantime, the Dashnak units in Persia were also instructed not to act against Tsarist

⁸¹⁴ The translation of articles from *Orizon* dated 16-17 October 1912, GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 14 (obshch.), ll. 33-37; Sarkisian, *Politika osmanskogo pravitelstva*, 284-85.

⁸¹⁵ GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 14 (obshch.), ll. 38-9; Sarkissian, 'Armianskii vopros i Rossiia v 1912-1914,' 113-4.

⁸¹⁶ The Head of Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of the OO DP, Aleksandr M. Eremin, 10 November 1912 [23 November 1912], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 7, l. 215 ob.

⁸¹⁷ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 19 November 1912 [2 December 1912], GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 14 (obshch.), ll. 32-32 ob.

⁸¹⁸ GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 7, ll. 220, ob; The Acting Minister of Internal Affairs to Kokovtsov, 27 January 1913 [9 February 1913], RGIA f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 29-32 ob.

forces.⁸¹⁹ Echoing the pro-Russian sentiment, a Dashnak circular from Paris stressed that the party remained friendly to Russia at that time.⁸²⁰

In early December, the Tiflis committee of the Dashnaktsutiun asked for help from the Catholicos for the unification of the Caucasian and Ottoman Armenians. Repeating the instructions he got from the viceroy, the Catholicos answered that no measure could be taken regarding the Ottoman Armenians until the end of the First Balkan War and he could not lend Dashnaks any material assistance. However, he told them that he had been informed by Patriarch Arsharuni that 'the Armenians in Erzurum, Bitlis and Van were arming and in case of necessity, the party could send some 1000 volunteers to these regions.'⁸²¹

Aware of the unpredictable actions of revolutionary organizations like the Dashnaks, the Russian authorities advised them to be quiet in this delicate moment. When the main Dashnak representative in St. Petersburg, Hagop Zavriev, met Girs, he was told that for the sake of the reforms, 'in the eyes of Europe, the Armenians needed to present themselves as the victims of the arbitrary Turkish rule not political revolutionaries.' Therefore, at that point, 'The Armenians should not bully the Turks, undertake rebellion and pressure the European powers for political demands.'⁸²²

Convening in the Armenian National Assembly in Istanbul in early 1913, all Armenian parties, including the Dashnaks decided to act in solidarity for the Armenian reforms.⁸²³ In the meeting, an influential Dashnak with an anti-Russian attitude, Sharikian, stated that the Dashnaks understood the need for solidarity in this process and they abandoned their territorial aims for the sake of reforms.⁸²⁴ According to Girs, these compromises were the indications of 'a truce if not a reconciliation between the Armenian political parties.'⁸²⁵

⁸¹⁹ The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of the OO DP, Eremin, 10 December 1912 [23 December 1912], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 7, ll. 221-221 ob.

⁸²⁰ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 24 December 1912 [6 January 1912], GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 14 (obshch.), l. 78.

⁸²¹ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 22 December 1912 [4 January 1913], GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 14 (obshch.), ll. 67- 69 ob.

⁸²² Girs to Sazonov, 14 December 1912 [27 December 1912], doc. no. 7, *Reformy v Armenii*, 11-2.

⁸²³ Girs to Sazonov, 27 December 1912 [9 January 1913], doc. no. 11, *Reformy v Armenii*, 20-1; Avagyan, 123; Sarkisian, *Politika osmanskogo pravitelstva*, 297-8.

⁸²⁴ GARF, f. 579, o. 1, d. 1863, l. 3 ob.

⁸²⁵ Girs to Sazonov, 27 December 1912 [9 January 1913], doc. no. 11, *Reformy v Armenii*, 20-1.

The meeting decided to continue relations with the Ottoman government and seek guarantees for reform.

The Dashnaks remained inactive against Russia in early 1913 when the Armenian public mood was hopeful of Russian support for the Ottoman Armenians.⁸²⁶ By then, there were two main currents in the party. The first of them, led by Zavarian and the editor of *Droshak*, Varandian, advocated a Russian protectorate over Turkish Armenia. The second group was aiming at a fair constitutional system in the Ottoman Empire and argued that Russian intervention would be useless.⁸²⁷ It was believed that a potential loss of the party's influence among the Armenians was the reason for the opposition of some of its members to Russian intervention.⁸²⁸ There were also discussions about the form of Russian support. The general line of the party was for an autonomous Armenia with the support of Russia but it opposed direct Russian occupation.⁸²⁹

Contrary reports stressed the anti-Russian views of some Dashnaks. For instance, in a meeting in February 1913, Sharikian made his sceptical views known again and claimed that Russia posed as the defender of the Armenians; however it did so to ultimately annex Turkish Armenia for its own benefit. The meeting was dominated by anti-Russian delegates who believed that a possible Russian annexation would bring more oppression.⁸³⁰ Another meeting in Bulgaria in February 1913 also reflected the same mood where it was stated that an autonomous Armenia was possible only under Ottoman rule.⁸³¹ Other reports also attested to the lack of confidence among some of the Dashnaks in the ultimate aims of the Russian policy.⁸³²

Despite the disagreements concerning Russia's ultimate designs, the Dashnaks continued their policy of not taking any actions against Russia, as it was working for the realization

⁸²⁶ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Erevan to the Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis, 2 January 1913 [15 January 1913], GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 14 (obshch.), l. 84.

⁸²⁷ 23 January 1913 [5 February 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 11, ll. 7-7 ob; The Acting Minister of Internal Affairs to Kokovtsov, 27 January 1913 [7 February 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, l. 31.

⁸²⁸ The Acting Minister of Internal Affairs to Kokovtsov, 27 January 1913 [9 February 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, l. 32 ob.

⁸²⁹ Kaligian, 165.

⁸³⁰ The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of the OO DP, Eremin, 1 March 1913 [14 March 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 11, ll. 11-11 ob.

⁸³¹ Ibid., l. 11ob.

⁸³² Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 72.

of the Armenian reforms. In principle, the party was expected to join revolutionary activities as a member of the Socialist International. However, the Dashnaks rejected the suggestion by the Russian SRs to participate in a strike to be held in Istanbul in May 1913 because many of its members were hopeful about ‘a Russian intervention for solving the question of autonomy of Turkish Armenia.’⁸³³ The cautious policy of the party regarding Russia came to such a point that the Western Bureau of the Dashnaktsutun proposed to cease all activity against Russia including the publication of anti-Russian articles in the party organs.⁸³⁴

Meanwhile the final verdict on the charges against Lyzhin and the appeals to the General Council of the Cassational Department of the Ruling Senate were announced. Having initially diagnosed Lyzhin’s psychological troubles, the Ministry of Justice claimed that the enormous workload of the trial was the main reason.⁸³⁵ After spending some time in a mental institution, Lyzhin was declared insane by a team of psychiatrists. All charges against him were dropped and he was provided with a state pension.⁸³⁶

On the Dashnak front, almost all convicts had appealed to the verdict and they were hopeful of the imperial pardon.⁸³⁷ Indeed, some of the convicted Dashnaks were pardoned by the imperial manifesto in February 1913. The party considered this as an imperial show-off since these were the members about whom the prosecution had already no solid evidence.⁸³⁸ Those who were previously sentenced to hard labour were released and sent to administrative exile to Irkutsk, like Amazasp Ohanjanian.⁸³⁹ Even the news of Lyzhin’s dismissal did not fully satisfy the Dashnaks. They believed that Lyzhin’s dismissal on the grounds of psychological illness and the light sentences were devised by

⁸³³ To the Head of the OO DP Eremin, 4 February 1913 [17 February 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 17, l. 29.

⁸³⁴ The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of the OO DP Eremin, 22 March 1913 [4 April 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 11, l. 23.

⁸³⁵ RGIA, f. 1405, o. 539, d. 675.

⁸³⁶ Kerensky, 80-1; Utevsii, 48; The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of OO Eremin, 11 March 1913 [24 March 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 11, l. 20.

⁸³⁷ RGIA, f. 935, o. 1, d. 299, l. 181; RGIA, f. 1405, o. 521, d. 471, ll. 321-33.

⁸³⁸ The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of the OO DP Eremin, 1 March 1913 [14 March 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 11, l. 13.

⁸³⁹ ‘K sudbe osuzhdennykh po delu partii Dashnaktsutun,’ *Zakavkazkaia rech*, 29 May 1913 [11 June 1913].

the Russian government not to lose face after the forgery scandal in the trial.⁸⁴⁰ For more good news, the Dashnaks had to wait a bit longer.

The key questions in the meantime were about the transportation of arms and fighters into Eastern Anatolia, the issue of self-defence of the Ottoman Armenians and the Dashnak role in it. Now that the dice were cast for the Ottoman Armenians, the first priority of the Dashnaksutun was to channel its energies for them. For the Dashnaks, the situation in the region was horrid and the Ottoman Armenians did not have the security of their lives and property. Thus, the Dashnaks began to concentrate more on the 'self-defence' of the Ottoman Armenians. The correspondence of the Russian secret police, military and consular reports attested to the intensification of Dashnaks' effort to this end from late 1912 on. An intelligence report stated that 'the most immediate objective [of the Dashnaks] remained obtaining as much quantity of arms, people and money possible, which was essential for the fight of Armenians in Turkey.'⁸⁴¹

The Dashnaks began to move their arms from the Caucasus and Persia to Eastern Anatolia. In the Caucasus, mainly in the provinces of Elizavetpol and Erevan, the party was gathering previously obtained weapons to be transported across the border.⁸⁴² Another Russian intelligence report pointed out that in the Ottoman Empire, the Dashnaks were trying to increase their prestige among the Armenians and 'forming armed battalions for the defence of Armenians from the Kurds as well as for the preparation of a rebellion against the Turks in case of a military success of the Balkan states against Turkey.'⁸⁴³ Similarly, the Hnchaks, though a less significant force in the

⁸⁴⁰ The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of the OO DP Eremin, 11 March 1913 [24 March 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 11, l. 20.

⁸⁴¹ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 5 October 1912 [18 October 1912], GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 14 (obshch.), ll. 3-6. In this period, the Balkans became a popular destination for the Dashnaks to purchase arms because of the lower prices. Kaligian, 187-8.

⁸⁴² The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 5 October 1912 [18 October 1912], GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 14 (obshch.), ll. 3-3 ob.

⁸⁴³ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 2 November 1912 [15 November 1912], GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 14 (obshch. delo), l. 21ob; RGIA, The Acting Minister of Internal Affairs to Kokovtsov, 27 January 1913 [9 February 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, l. 29.

Russian Empire were also reported to be transporting their materiel from the Caucasus to Ottoman Armenia.⁸⁴⁴

Another line of activity of the Dashnaks was about the collection of donations to fund its operations. By October 1912, their efforts did not produce the expected results as the money collected for self-defence, except for a 50,000 rouble check given by the oil-men Mirzoev brothers in Baku, was insufficient.⁸⁴⁵ Afterwards, Vramian, a prominent Dashnak, also worked towards collecting donations when he visited the South Caucasus in early 1913. However, the results were again very disappointing. Particularly important was the stingy attitude of the clergy and the Armenian bourgeoisie ('commercial-industrial elements'), who believed that the fate of the Ottoman Armenians completely was on Russian hands and real help could only be expected from her.⁸⁴⁶

Toward spring 1913, the Dashnak effort for transportation of arms to Eastern Anatolia was noted by the Russian and other consulates.⁸⁴⁷ During his visit to the South Caucasus, Vramian also had explored the official Russian attitude about the transportation of weapons and other military equipment from Russia to the Ottoman Empire and the level of Russian Armenian support for a possible rebellion undertaken by the Ottoman Armenians. The Russian authorities declared that such actions were forbidden.⁸⁴⁸ Although not pressured as they were used to, the Dashnaks' operations of arms transport were still under scrutiny by the Tsarist authorities, who suspected the Dashnaks of complicating the situation.

In northern Persia, the Tsarist authorities raided the arms depots of the party. It created dissent among the Dashnaks, who lamented that 'these weapons were exclusively for

⁸⁴⁴ The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of the OO DP Eremin, 16 January 1913 [29 January 1913], GARF, f. 102, OO (1913), o. 243, d. 29 (obshch.), ll. 1-1 ob.

⁸⁴⁵ OO DP to the Head of Secret Service in Turkey, 25 October 1912 [7 November 1912], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 7, ll. 213-214 ob.

⁸⁴⁶ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 4 January 1913 [17 January 1913], GARF, f. 102, OO (1913), o. 243, d. 14 (obshch.), ll. 8-9 ob; Kaligian, 188-90.

⁸⁴⁷ Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge: Harvard UP/Belknap, 2011), 92; Chief of Staff of the Caucasus military district to General-quartermaster of the General Staff, 12 February 1913 [25 February 1913], doc. no. 11, in Mehmet Perinçek, *Armianskii vopros v 120 dokumentakh iz rossiiskikh gosudarstvennykh arkhivov* (Moscow: Laboratoriia Knigi, 2011), 47-8.

⁸⁴⁸ The Acting Minister of Internal Affairs to Kokovtsov, 27 January 1913 [9 February 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 32 ob-33; The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 4 January 1913 [17 January 1913], GARF, f. 102, OO (1913), o. 243, d. 14 (obshch.), ll. 8-9 ob.

self-defence against the fanatical Muslims' and now the Armenians were left with 'armed Muslim population organizing constant massacres of the Armenians.'⁸⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the crossings of armed Armenian groups from the Caucasus, mainly through northern Persia continued.⁸⁵⁰ The Russian vice-consul in Van, Olferev suggested a milder course about arms smuggling. He argued that the weapons of the Dashnaks stockpiled in northern Persia were given to them by the CUP when they were allied against Russia during the constitutional movement in Persia. The Dashnaks could be now allowed to smuggle them back into the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁵¹

Toward the End of the First Balkan War

When hostilities in the Balkans restarted in February 1913 after Enver Pasha's storming of the Porte, the Russian anxiety over instability in Eastern Anatolia intensified. Its potential impact on the South Caucasus was a common theme regarding the Russian position on the Armenian reforms. In the first phase of the reform talks, Sazonov had talked about a possible Russian intervention into Eastern Anatolia if the reform attempts failed to fix the chronic problems in the region which could lead to violence.⁸⁵² In late January, Sazonov repeated the same line to the ambassador in Paris, Izvolskii, and the German ambassador in St. Petersburg, Pourtales, stating that Russia could not stay indifferent to the bloodshed in the bordering regions by virtue of its own Armenian population.⁸⁵³

⁸⁴⁹ The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of OO DP to Eremin, 9 March 1913 [22 March 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 11, l. 17.

⁸⁵⁰ Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs to Sukhomlinov, 16 May 1913 [29 May 1913], doc. no. 14, in Perinçek, 53-4.

⁸⁵¹ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 102.

⁸⁵² Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 74; Somakian, 46-47; Davison, 488.

⁸⁵³ A.S. Avetian, 'Obostrenie russko-germanskikh protivorechii i konsolidatsiia Antanty nakanune pervoi mirovoi voiny,' in *Istoriia vneshnei politiki Rossii. Konets XIX-XX veka (Ot russko-frantsuzskogo soiюза do*

However, as the conflict in the Balkans resumed, the situation in the region became even more fragile. Reports describing the miserable conditions of the Ottoman Armenians were coming to the Catholicos, who was worried that the resettlement of the Muslim refugees escaping from the Balkan Wars in Anatolia could aggravate the situation.⁸⁵⁴ The dispatches of the Russian and British diplomats in the spring of 1913 were also portraying the same picture.⁸⁵⁵ Warned by the Armenian Patriarch that ‘the threat of mass massacres lingering all over Anatolia,’ Girs complained to the Prime Minister Mahmut Sevket Pasha and asked Sazonov to take necessary measures.⁸⁵⁶

The Ottoman diplomats were also aware of the situation. Based on his conversations with Sazonov, the Ottoman ambassador in St. Petersburg, Turhan Pasha, warned the Porte that any security problem in Eastern Anatolia which could provoke a Russian intervention had to be prevented.⁸⁵⁷ Similarly, the Ottoman ambassador to Vienna, Hilmi Pasha, also stressed the internal and external significance of the reforms in the eastern provinces and noted that unless the destitute conditions were improved, the efforts of the Armenians in Europe for the reforms would not stop.⁸⁵⁸

As Hilmi Pasha foresaw it, the efforts of the Armenian National Delegation in the European capitals did not stop. However, they were getting more anxious as Boghos Nubar asked Izvolskii in late February ‘whether the expected moment had arrived since the peace in the Balkans was imminent.’⁸⁵⁹ Another delegation was sent by the Armenian Patriarchate to explain the position of the Patriarchate and the Armenian National

Oktiabrskoi revoliutsii), ed. Anatolii V. Ignatev (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1997), 352-6; Bayur, vol. 2, pt. 3, 31-3.

⁸⁵⁴ ‘Letter from Vorontsov-Dashkov to Sazonov, 7 February 1913 [20 February 1913], doc. no. 12, in *Reformy v Armenii*, 22.

⁸⁵⁵ Lazarev, 209; Gerard Lowther to Edward Grey, 5 April 1913, PRO, FO 371/1773.

⁸⁵⁶ Letter of Patriarch of the Ottoman Armenians to Girs, 20 May 1913 [2 June 1913], doc. no. 125, Nersisian, *Genotsid armian*, 261-3; Mahmut Şevket Paşa, *Harbiye Nazırı Sadrazam Mahmut Şevket Paşa'nın Günlüğü*, ed. Adem Sarıgöl (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat, 2001), 195-6; Girs to Sazonov, 14 May 1913, doc. no. 26, in *Reformy v Armenii*, 36.

⁸⁵⁷ Turhan Pasha to the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 20 Kanunusani 1913 [20 January 1913], doc. no. 37, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Rus İlişkileri*, vol. 3 (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2006), 75-6. In his conversation with Pourtales in January 1913, Turhan Pasha dismissed the claims regarding the situation in eastern Anatolia and Ottoman Armenians and expressed his concerns about the recent conduct of Russian foreign policy about this. Bayur, vol. 2, pt. 3, 31-33.

⁸⁵⁸ The Ottoman Ambassador in Vienna, Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry, 8 February 1913, doc. no. 66, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri (1879-1918)*, vol. 1 (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2002), 199-200.

⁸⁵⁹ Bayur, vol. 2, pt. 3, 50-1.

Assembly in Istanbul to the European circles. As these delegations worked toward the realization of the Armenian reforms, Khatisian emerged as a leading character as he was reported to be directing the delegates and ‘seemed to be the representative of all Caucasian Armenians.’⁸⁶⁰

Khatisian and other prominent members of the Armenian bourgeoisie made sure that their demands for urgent action were heard in Tiflis. Along with Bishop Mesrop, Samson Arutiunian, Aleksandr A. Kalantar and Papadzhanov, Khatisian paid a visit to the deputy to the viceroy, General Nikolai P. Shatilov, in May. Expressing their concerns about the deteriorating conditions of the Ottoman Armenians, the delegation asked the Russian government to provide the Ottoman Armenians with ‘the means for self-defence against the openly attacking enemy.’ More precisely, the deputation asked the Russian government to secretly supply arms to the Ottoman Armenians, who would use them exclusively for self-defence and only in extreme conditions.⁸⁶¹

The viceroy confirmed the worries of the Armenian delegation and warned that dissatisfaction among the Ottoman Armenians toward Russia would cause discontent among the Russian Armenians.⁸⁶² Thus, the Russian government should take measures which would calm Armenians and assure them of their defence by Russia. By virtue of a significant Armenian population in the Caucasus, the viceroy argued that Russia had to be vigilant about the Armenian and Kurdish questions across the border and garner the sympathies of these two nationalities.⁸⁶³

On the issue of arms provision, the viceroy asserted that if Russia could guarantee the security of the Ottoman Armenians until the Armenian question was solved, then it would make sense not to give them weapons since this would prevent Armenians from taking any active measures. However, if Russia lacked the means to protect Ottoman Armenians and a wholesale massacre occurred, a rejection of such a proposal would create discontent among the Russian Armenians and would force all Armenians to seek help in

⁸⁶⁰ The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to DP OO, 4 February 1913 [17 February 1913], GARF, f. 102, OO (1913), o. 243, d. 14 (obshch.), l. 30.

⁸⁶¹ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Sazonov, 2 May 1913 [15 May 1913], doc. no. 123, Nersisian, *Genotsid armian*, 256-8.

⁸⁶² Ibid.

⁸⁶³ Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 133-5.

Europe.⁸⁶⁴ The viceroy was still advocating a cautious policy but he also knew that unless the situation across the border was sorted out, the South Caucasus was in grave danger.

Toward the end of the Balkan conflict, more bad news about the Ottoman Armenians was received by the Russian Foreign Ministry. Reiterating their position once again, Sazonov stated that 'Russia had a common interest with the Turkish government to avert any dangerous complications in its border regions in the Caucasus' to which Russia could not remain indifferent, particularly considering its considerable Armenian subjects. He also added that the Russian authorities were doing what they could to calm the Armenians and avoid any complications until the end of the Armenian reform negotiations.⁸⁶⁵

From the End of the First Balkan War to the Agreement on the Armenian Reforms (May 1913- February 1914)

The Negotiations for the Armenian Reforms

As the First Balkan War ended, the Russians intensified their efforts for the Armenian reforms taking into the account of the moves of other Great Powers. On the draft project, there were different proposals by the Armenian National Delegation and the commission assigned by the Armenian Patriarchate. Later a common proposal, on which Girs and Mandelshtam offered some final changes, was agreed upon and presented to the Ottoman authorities.⁸⁶⁶ In April 1913, to prevent this inevitable move, the Ottoman authorities had asked the British to send two general-governors along with officers and civil servants to implement reforms in Eastern Anatolia, but this was refused by the British, mainly owing

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁵ Dispatch of Sazonov to the Russian ambassador to Germany, 22 May 1913 [4 June 1913], doc. no. 31, in *Reformy v Armenii*, 39-40; The note of the Russian Embassy, 26 May 1913, doc. no. 619, *Documents diplomatiques français (1871-1914)* (hereafter *DDF*) ser. 3, vol. 6 (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1933), 718.

⁸⁶⁶ Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 123-5

to Russian opposition.⁸⁶⁷ Sazonov explained their opposition on the basis of their obligations toward the Armenian representatives to whom Russia assured of the realization of the reforms. For this reason, 'Russia could not play the second violin in this matter.'⁸⁶⁸

In May 1913, the Ottoman government, collaborating with a commission of Armenians, came up with its own draft project, which was seen by Girs as a ploy for getting foreign intervention (mainly Russia) out of the way.⁸⁶⁹ The Ottoman diplomats in Europe warned Istanbul to implement reforms immediately to prevent foreign control in Eastern Anatolia.⁸⁷⁰ When Turhan Pasha asked Sazonov what he made of the Ottoman proposal, the Russian Foreign Minister stated that it was inadequate and would not satisfy the needs of the local population. Repeating the importance of peace in Eastern Anatolia for the Russian Armenian population, Sazonov again did not spare the hints of intervention for the security of the Caucasus.⁸⁷¹

When the ambassadors of the Great Powers met at the Austria-Hungarian embassy in Istanbul in July 1913, these points were discussed again. The Russian plan, which was primarily opposed by the representatives of the Ottoman Empire, Germany and Austria-Hungary, also created concerns for the British and the French.⁸⁷² One of the most contentious items was the establishment of a single province where the reforms would be carried out. The Russian proposal regarding a single province was rejected not only by the Ottomans but also by the Germans, the British and the French, who believed that such an entity could lead to an autonomous province with aspirations to annexation to

⁸⁶⁷ Zekeriya Türkmen, *Vilayat-ı Şarkiye (Doğu Anadolu Vilayetleri) Islahat Müfettişliği 1913-1914* (Ankara: TTK, 2006), 35-36; Menteşe, 168; Said Halim Pasha, *L'empire Ottoman et la Guerre Mondiale* (Istanbul: ISIS, 2000), 6; Aksakal, 60.

⁸⁶⁸ O'Beirne to Grey, 26 May 1913, in Gooch, vol. 10, pt. 1, 438; O'Beirne to Grey, 27 May 1913, in *ibid.*, 441; Aksakal, 61; Joseph Heller, 'Britain and the Armenian Question, 1912-1914: A Study in Realpolitik,' *Middle Eastern Studies* 16, no. 1 (1980): 9.

⁸⁶⁹ For the Ottoman project of reform in the eastern provinces see doc. no. 12, in Türkmen, 123-31; Menteşe, 172; Sarkisian, 'Armianskii vopros i Rossiia v 1912-1914,' 118.

⁸⁷⁰ The Ottoman ambassador in Vienna, Rifat Pasha to Said Halim Pasha, 27 June 1913, doc. no. 69, *Osmanli Belgelerinde Ermeni-Fransız İlişkileri*, 202-4.

⁸⁷¹ Turhan Pasha to Said Halim Pasha, 2 June 1913, doc. no. 15, in Türkmen, 135-6; Buchanan to Grey, 2 July 1913, in Gooch, vol. 1, pt. 1, 471.

⁸⁷² Sazonov, *Fateful Years*, 143- 144; Davison, 496-97.

Russia.⁸⁷³ Another criticism was about the appointment of the General-Governor with the agreement of the Great Powers. For Wangenheim, the German ambassador in Istanbul, the Russian project would lead to an autonomous Greater Armenia ruled by a Russian governor.⁸⁷⁴

The German opposition to the Russian plan obviously had logic to it. For German interests, the moribund Ottoman Empire had to survive long enough to provide the time for Germany to consolidate its hold there but the Balkan Wars demonstrated that an imminent collapse was also a possibility.⁸⁷⁵ As Aksakal argues, after the Ottoman losses during the First Balkan War, Germany was preparing for an eventual Ottoman downfall and a possible direct takeover instead of its former preference of setting a protectorate over the Ottoman Empire in the long term.⁸⁷⁶ For the German Foreign Ministry, Russian occupation of Eastern Anatolia in such a case was an annoyance, which could be countered by active German participation in the Armenian reform negotiations.⁸⁷⁷

Aware of the inevitability of reforms, Germany took part in the negotiation process in order to block direct Russian influence over the supervision of reforms. The German Foreign Ministry was equally concerned about an Ottoman collapse and the Ottoman Armenians were important for their plans in that scenario. Therefore, their role in the Armenian reforms, with a hint of opposition to the Russian demands, would bring them the sympathies of the Ottoman Armenians and the Ottoman government, which could be useful if the Ottoman Empire could survive longer.⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷³ Cambon to Foreign Minister Pichon, 10 July 1913, doc. no. 331, *DDF*, ser. 3, vol. 7, 368; Sazonov to Chargé d'affaires in Germany, 26 July 1913 [8 August 1913], doc. no. 59, *Reformy v Armenii*, 77-8; Heller, *British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire*, 13; Grey to E. Goschen, 3 July 1913, in Gooch, vol. 10, pt. 1, 474.

⁸⁷⁴ Bompard to Pichon, 10 September 1913, doc. no. 135, *DDF*, ser. 3, vol. 8, 163.

⁸⁷⁵ Aksakal, 67; Frank Weber, *Eagles on the Crescent: Germany, Austria, and the Diplomacy of the Turkey* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1970), 24; Robert J. Kerner, 'The Mission of Liman von Sanders. I. Its Origin,' *The Slavonic Review* 6, no. 16 (June 1927): 15-16; H.S.W. Corrigan, 'German-Turkish Relations and the Outbreak of War in 1914: A Re-Assessment,' *Past & Present*, no. 36 (April 1967): 146; Kirakossian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 140.

⁸⁷⁶ Aksakal, 90-1.

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 73-4.

⁸⁷⁸ Stepanian, 92; Kirakossian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 145; Akopian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia v planakh*, 58; Bayram Soy, 'Alman Dışişleri Bakanlığı Arşivine Göre II. Wilhelm Döneminde Almanya'nın Osmanlı Ermenilerine Yaklaşımı (1914'e Kadar),' *Karadeniz Araştırmaları*, no. 19 (Fall 2008): 125; Gulkevich to Sazonov, 27 January 1914 [9 February 1914], in *MO*, series 3, vol. 1, 251-60.

Wangenheim believed that the Russian interest in the Armenian question was, in fact, a way to 'open up the Straits question.'⁸⁷⁹ However, the take of Count Pourtales was more realistic. Disagreeing with Wangenheim, Pourtales noted that Russia under Sazonov 'showed no desire to open the Straits question by way of Armenian reforms. She hoped rather to make it unnecessary for her to intervene in Armenia, because unrest there might lead to disorder and revolution on her border.'⁸⁸⁰ Pourtales' view was supported by Jagow, who asked him to tell Sazonov that Germany was not involved in an anti-Russian scheme but simply feared that the Russian reform project would lead to unfavourable consequences.⁸⁸¹ Nevertheless, the German Foreign Ministry still feared that Russia could intervene if things went out of control in Eastern Anatolia so they decided to settle for a compromise on the Armenian reforms from fall 1913 onward.

Pourtales was on the spot about the Russian policy on the Armenian reform negotiations as part of its grander foreign policy interests on the Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First Balkan War. As the First Balkan War ended, Sazonov continued his cautious approach arguing that Russia was not ready militarily for a general European war, which could be triggered by an action like military intervention in the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁸² In fact, the current situation of the Ottoman Empire was considered beneficial for Russia. The Ottoman Empire was neither too weak to give the Straits away, nor too strong to threaten Russian interests.⁸⁸³ The Ottoman possession of the Straits would block the capture of them by another Great Power, the *bête noire* of the Russian Foreign Ministry.⁸⁸⁴ Sazonov strongly stated that the Straits and a surrounding region should be

⁸⁷⁹ Kerner, 22-3. Sazonov was very unhappy about Wangenheim's anti-Russian attitude as he continued to accuse Russia of expansionary aims about the Ottoman Empire in the diplomatic circles in Istanbul. Jagow warned Wangenheim about not giving the impression of Russophobia in such a critical period. Jagow to Wangenheim, 14 July 1913, in Vartges Mikaelian, ed., *Armianskii vopros i genotsid armian v Turtsii (1913-1919): Materialy Politarkhiva MID Kaiserovskoi Germanii* (Erevan: Gitutiun NAN RA, 1995), 98-9.

⁸⁸⁰ Kerner, 23.

⁸⁸¹ Jagow to Pourtales, 14 July 1913, in Mikaelian, 99-100.

⁸⁸² Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 128-9.

⁸⁸³ Zakher, 74.

⁸⁸⁴ Kostrikova, 291; Dominic Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 45-6.

held either by the Ottoman Empire or Russia or 'Russia would regard any attempt made by another Power to take permanent possession of them as a *casus belli*.'⁸⁸⁵

Therefore, according to Sazonov, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was not desirable for Russia and all diplomatic efforts needed to be done to postpone it.⁸⁸⁶ For the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Russian policy on the Armenian reforms was toward this end. In the summer of 1913, during the negotiations between the Entente powers concerning the reforms, Sazonov acknowledged the importance of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, which would benefit from the reforms.⁸⁸⁷ Moreover, having good relations with the Ottoman Empire was also beneficial for the relations between the Russian Muslims and the Russian government.⁸⁸⁸ Naturally, this would require a better understanding with the Ottoman Empire but without giving the Armenians the impression that Russia was not pressing hard enough for reforms. In a cunning fashion, as Grigorii N. Trubetskoi, the head of the Near Eastern Section of the Russian Foreign Ministry, publicly declared in August 1913 that 'the pressure would be on Turkey' about the reforms, his Foreign Minister sent secret instructions to Girs for a rapprochement with the Ottoman Empire on the same day.⁸⁸⁹

Another factor in the Russian assessment of the Ottoman Empire's fate was the Kurdish population there. Given the mutual suspicions held by the Russians and the Ottomans, the idea to gain influence among the Kurdish tribes had been echoed previously. Vorontsov-Dashkov, along with other Russian officials, was supportive of the idea of allying some of the Kurdish chiefs by distributing them pensions and lands, which would minimize a potential threat in case of a war with the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁹⁰ When the reform negotiations started, Sazonov also instructed the Russian diplomatic corps in the Ottoman and Persian empires to work for expanding Russian influence among the Kurds and look into the possibility of uniting the Kurds without forgetting the relation between the

⁸⁸⁵ Ronald Bobroff, 'Behind the Balkan Wars: Russian Policy toward Bulgaria and the Turkish Straits, 1912-13,' *Russian Review* 59, no. 1 (January 2000): 83-4.

⁸⁸⁶ Zakher, 74.

⁸⁸⁷ Bayur, vol. 2, pt. 3, 101-2; Buchanan to Grey, 8 July 1913, in Gooch, vol. 10, pt. 1, 486.

⁸⁸⁸ Zakher, 74.

⁸⁸⁹ Igor V. Bestuzhev, 'Borba v Rossii po voprosam vneshnei politiki nakanune pervoi mirovoi voiny (1910-1914),' *Istoricheskie zapiski* 75 (1965): 71.

⁸⁹⁰ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Izvolskii, 28 January 1910 [10 February 1910], in Diakin, 518-9; Somakian 50.

Kurdish and Armenian questions.⁸⁹¹ As Reynolds notes, in addition to their role in a potential war with the Ottoman Empire, increased influence among the Kurds could also be used by the Russians as leverage against Armenian revolutionaries.⁸⁹² Therefore, whether the Ottoman Empire disintegrated or not, maintaining Russian influence among the Kurds was seen essential by the Russians.

Uneasy relations between some Kurdish tribes and the Ottoman government were noted by several Russian observers, who believed that this could be used to their advantage. By 1913, there were many Kurdish chiefs who would be willing to serve for Russia.⁸⁹³ Soon, these Kurdish chiefs were distributed arms and money by the Russians to expand their influence in Eastern Anatolia.⁸⁹⁴ A particularly well-known Kurdish chief in this regard was Abdurrezzak Bedirkhan, whose lineage, familiarity with the Russian authorities and Russian culture from his days at the Ottoman embassy in St. Petersburg made him a favourite for the Russians.⁸⁹⁵

The Russian interest in the Kurds was interpreted by the German and British diplomats as a move for creating a pretext for military intervention by inciting the Kurds against the Ottoman Armenians.⁸⁹⁶ However, Reynolds argues that it was ‘the clash of St. Petersburg’s clashing strategic objectives’ (postponing the demise of the Ottoman Empire until she was ready and obtaining more influence over the Kurds) that created a dilemma, in which Russia was working both for the stability in Eastern Anatolia by supporting the Armenian reforms and disrupting it by expanding its influence on the Kurds. For Lazarev, this was the Russian double game which was implemented for Russia’s own colonial and imperialist interests.⁸⁹⁷ Perhaps, the Russian authorities believed that from the perspective of stability in Eastern Anatolia, the benefits of the Armenian reforms would lessen the friction between these two objectives.

⁸⁹¹ Lazarev, 223-24; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 72-3.

⁸⁹² Tibet Abak, ‘Rus Arşiv Belgelerinde Bitlis İsyanı (1914),’ *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 208 (April 2011): 77; Michael Reynolds, ‘Ottoman Diplomat, Russophile, and Kurdish Patriot: Abdurrezzak Bedirhan and the Seams of Empire,’ *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 428-30.

⁸⁹³ Lazarev, 206; McMeekin, *The Russian Origins*, 148-9; Reynolds, ‘Ottoman Diplomat, Russophile, and Kurdish Patriot,’ 427.

⁸⁹⁴ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 63-4; idem., ‘Ottoman Diplomat, Russophile, and Kurdish Patriot,’ 439.

⁸⁹⁵ Reynolds, ‘Ottoman Diplomat, Russophile, and Kurdish Patriot,’ 427.

⁸⁹⁶ Aksakal, 74-5; Bayur, vol. 2, pt. 3, 85.

⁸⁹⁷ Lazarev, 243.

There was very little space to manoeuvre for the Russians simply because of the structural conflict between the Armenians and Kurds in Eastern Anatolia. Nevertheless, based on their observation of several acts of cooperation between the Kurds and Armenians against the Ottoman government, some Russian officials suggested bringing the Armenians and Kurds together, which could resolve the conflict in their strategy.⁸⁹⁸ However, there was a major obstacle to this plan: these cooperative elements could be brought together only against the Ottoman State, which could only lead to an Ottoman collapse, a result the Russians did not favour by 1913. This conundrum led the Russian consul in Bitlis, Vasilii I. Shirkov, to note that ‘the Armenian question was always the Kurdish–Armenian [Question], since the Armenians suffered and suffer precisely from the Kurds under the weakness and incapability (intentional or not, it is also a big question) of the Turkish authorities.’⁸⁹⁹ In other words, the deeply-rooted economic, social, and religious reasons for conflict between the Armenians and Kurds and the Russian primacy for keeping Ottoman Empire intact created a difficult situation for the Russian decision makers.

Meanwhile, there was some progress in the reform negotiations. By October 1913, Girs and Wangenheim agreed to sort out most of their differences such as the establishment of two sectors instead of a single province and the status of the general-governor. However, it was now the Ottoman government that raised its opposition as the CUP circles were complaining about foreign interference. The Ottoman Prime Minister, Said Halim Pasha, lamented that this project was aimed at creating ‘Lebanons everywhere in Turkey.’⁹⁰⁰ Girs was aware of this as he reported to St. Petersburg that the CUP was trying to ‘bury the Armenian question by all means’ and only the European guarantee could pacify the Armenians and bring internal peace to Turkey.⁹⁰¹ The negotiations again stuck and it caused grave anxiety among the Russian Armenians, whose pressure on the Russian government created a tense situation in the South Caucasus.

⁸⁹⁸ The General Consul in Erzurum, Adamov to Girs, 26 October 1913 [8 November 1913], doc. no. 128, Nersisian, *Genotsid armian*, 264-66; Petr I. Averianov, *Etnograficheskii i voenno-politicheskii obzor aziatskikh vladenii Ottomanskoi Imperii* (St. Petersburg: Voennaia tipografiia, 1912), 29-30; Janet Klein, ‘Conflict and Collaboration: Rethinking Kurdish-Armenian Relations in the Hamidian Period 1876-1909,’ *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 13, nos.1-2 (Fall 2007): 163.

⁸⁹⁹ Lazarev, 245; Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 78.

⁹⁰⁰ Bayur, vol. 2, pt. 3, 148; Bompard to Pichon, 9 October 1913, doc. no. 296, *DDF*, ser. 3, vol. 8, 376.

⁹⁰¹ Girs to Sazonov, 16 October 1913 [29 October 1913], doc. no. 92, *Reformy v Armenii*, 102-03.

The Russian Armenians during the Negotiation Process

Not trusting in the Ottoman promises of internal reforms, the Dashnaksutun was hopeful of a reform project under the guarantees of the Great Powers. In principle, the party was advocating administrative self-government for the eastern provinces as an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁰² Nevertheless, the project was considered by the Dashnaks a step in the right direction as they were generally content with the Russian proposals.⁹⁰³ There were still sceptics among the Dashnaks, for whom Russia had 'opposed to give the Ottoman Armenians extensive freedoms with the Armenian reforms because of the danger it could reflect on the Russian Armenians, who had different demands.'⁹⁰⁴ Acknowledging how the Russian government damaged the party recently, Vramian noted that 'the Dashnaks, unlike the Catholicos and Armenian merchants, had never sought European control, since that would involve Russia's participation, and Russian control would destroy their party.'⁹⁰⁵

Meanwhile, anxious about the Ottoman Armenians, the party continued its efforts for arming and collection of donations.⁹⁰⁶ A distinctive feature of the policy in this period was that the Dashnaks were now arming the local Ottoman Armenians irrespective of their party affiliations and addressing the whole Armenian population. The Dashnaks hoped that this would convince the Great Powers that this was a national movement not the party's.⁹⁰⁷ In order to fund these activities, donations were being demanded, especially from the Russian Armenians.⁹⁰⁸ To sum up, the Dashnak position on Russia remained unchanged during the negotiation process.

⁹⁰² Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 137-8

⁹⁰³ DP OO to the Head of Secret Service in Turkey, 20 August 1913 [2 September 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 11, ll. 83-84.

⁹⁰⁴ The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of OO DP, Broetskii, 7 September 1913 [20 September 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 11, l. 39.

⁹⁰⁵ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 74.

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid., 73; Avagyan, 86-7.

⁹⁰⁷ The Department of Police to the Head of the Secret Service in Turkey, 20 August 1913 [2 September 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 11, ll. 83-84.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid.

On the pages of *Tifliskii listok*, an article described the change of relations between the Russian government and the Russian Armenians. The article stated that all the problems of Golitsyn's administration had been sorted out thanks to the policies of Vorontsov-Dashkov. Now, the Armenian perception of Russian intentions was quite favourable and it was time for Russia to help the Ottoman Armenians.⁹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the Russian Armenians kept sending their delegations to the viceroy. As the First Balkan War was now over, they were expecting more decisive measures. An important suggestion by the Russian Armenians was about the permission by the Russian authorities for transportation of arms from the Caucasus into Eastern Anatolia.

The Russian officials were aware of the potential entanglements of intensive arming among the Ottoman Armenians led by the Armenian revolutionaries. For Vorontsov-Dashkov, historical experience showed that Russian interference in Ottoman affairs for the sake of Armenians brought internal and external complications (especially regarding the Russian Armenians and poor relations with the Ottoman Empire) rather than any benefits. Hence, the Russian policy should be designed not to irritate both the Ottoman government and the Russian Armenians. Therefore, the viceroy suggested preventing any open manifestation of assistance by the Russian Armenians to their Ottoman compatriots and persecuting those only harmful for the internal peace of the Caucasus. On the other hand, border crossings of the Russian Armenian volunteers heading to Eastern Anatolia could be allowed not to irritate the Russian Armenians. Since these Armenian volunteers were mainly from the ranks of uneasy elements of the Caucasus population, this policy would help improve the internal peace and order in the Caucasus. For the viceroy, such a policy would hit two birds with one stone.⁹¹⁰

Therefore, the viceroy believed that Russian permission for transportation of arms into the Ottoman Empire could help appease the Armenian bourgeoisie and the Armenian Church at a time when he was particularly concerned with keeping good relations with them considering the resurrection of the labour movement and its impact on the South

⁹⁰⁹ 'Rossiia and Armeniia,' *Tiflisskii listok*, 29 August 1913 [11 September 1913]. Similarly, the British consul in Batumi noted that the Caucasian press was demanding a more active Russian interference on behalf of the Ottoman Armenians. Consul Stevens to Grey, 26 June 1913, PRO, FO 371/1773.

⁹¹⁰ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Kokovtsov, 31 October 1913 [13 November 1913], SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 2883, ll. 4-5 ob.

Caucasus. After the Lena shootings in April 1912, the Russian revolutionary movement had become more active. A simultaneous revival was also observed in the organized labour as the frequency of strikes went up between 1912 and 1914.⁹¹¹

In the South Caucasus, this was particularly felt in Baku, where general strikes were held in 1913 with the impact of the rise of oil prices.⁹¹² Although these strikes were of mostly economic character according to the Russian officials, they still had to be cautious about organized labour. What St. Petersburg wanted to see was the continuation of the 5 percent annual growth rate between 1909 and 1913, not its disruption.⁹¹³ This was more so as the general strike of 1913 in Baku caused such a fall in the output that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry was forced to import oil until December 1913.⁹¹⁴

Supporting the viceroy's ideas, Sazonov noted that they still had to be cautious about their support for the Armenians. According to Sazonov, the Armenian leaders needed to be told that 'such actions of the Russian government must not be interpreted as an encouragement to them [the Armenians] to revolt', which would be 'extremely inopportune for Russia.' Therefore, actions like transporting large quantities of arms by the Armenians to the Ottoman Empire had to be avoided.⁹¹⁵ Kokovstov soon approved of the suggestion of the viceroy on this double-aimed policy, which would satisfy both the Ottoman and Russian Armenians.⁹¹⁶

Pan-Islam as the Most Imminent Threat in the South Caucasus

With the end of the First Balkan War, the viceroyalty's concern about the influence of the pan-Islamist movement aggravated as Islam began to be used more by the CUP for the internal cohesion of the Ottoman Empire. The CUP was also aware that they did not have

⁹¹¹ Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, 192.

⁹¹² Altstadt-Mirhadi, 'Baku,' 307.

⁹¹³ Peter Gatrell, *Russia's First World War: A Social and Economic History* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), 3.

⁹¹⁴ Arutiunov, *Rabochee dvizhenie v Zakavkaze*, 296; 311.

⁹¹⁵ Sazonov to Kokovtsov, 9 December 1913 [22 December 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 44-44 ob.

⁹¹⁶ Kokovtsov to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 13 December 1913 [26 December 1913], SSSA, f. 13, o. 27, d. 2883, ll. 24 ob-25.

too much leverage against the Great Powers so they realized that improved ties and coordination with other Muslims, especially with the Russian Muslims could be helpful. The South Caucasus was a key region, where during the Balkan Wars; the Ottoman emissaries arrived to mobilize Muslim solidarity for the Ottoman Empire by asking donations, handing out pamphlets and organizing secret meetings with the locals.⁹¹⁷

Meanwhile, a new Azeri political party, Musavat (Equality), which was established in late 1911, began to add to the worries of the Russian administration. Led by Mehmed Emin Resulzade, this party stressed the importance of unity among the Muslims and the independence of Muslim states.⁹¹⁸ Such political developments were confirming the suspicions of the Russian officialdom about the pan-Islamist movement and its anti-government propaganda, which was getting stronger in the aftermath of the Balkan conflict. According to the reports, this was particularly dangerous among the 'more fanatical and propaganda-prone Caucasian and Central Asian Muslims.'⁹¹⁹ In Batumi, the Tsarist gendarmerie spotted 15 Ottoman officers, who were suspected of carrying out pan-Islamist propaganda in the region.⁹²⁰

The Russian anxiety about the pan-Islamist threat grew to such a height that even the Dashnaks, who knew about it, had plans to use it to their advantage. In a Dashnak congress in fall 1913, it was proposed to send their men as pan-Islamist emissaries to incite the Muslim population, which would then lead the Russians to increase their pressure on the Muslims. As a result, the Muslims would be weakened and the Dashnaks would not meet any Muslim resistance in the Caucasus.⁹²¹

⁹¹⁷ Colonel Pastrulin to the Director of the Department of Police, 1 November 1912 [14 November 1912], GARF, f. 102, OO (1912), o. 242, d. 74 (obshch.), l. 136; *Dokumenty po Russkoi politike na Zakavkazii*, 87.

⁹¹⁸ Kazamzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia*, 21; Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920*, 74; Suny, *The Baku Commune*, 19. Resulzade had to stay in Istanbul as there was a search warrant to his name in the South Caucasus. He would eventually be pardoned in 1913, thanks to the general amnesty for the tercentenary year of the Romanov monarchy. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks*, 73.

⁹¹⁹ The Head of Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of OO DP Eremin, 21 August 1913 [3 September 1913], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 13, ll. 16-16 ob.

⁹²⁰ Arutiunian, *Kavkazskii front*, 45.

⁹²¹ Bagirova, 225; Musa Gasimov, 'Azerbaycan Arşivlerindeki Rus ve Ermeni Kaynaklarına İstinaden Ermeni Silahlı Gruplarının Hazırlanması ve Terörü (1914-1917 yılları),' in *Uluslararası Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri Sempozyumu: 24-25 Mayıs 2001: Bildiriler* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, 2001), 467.

By mid-1913, another concern for the Russians was the increased German activity in Eastern Anatolia with a view to help the CUP emissaries in the South Caucasus and northern Persia. The establishment of the German [special] general consulate in Erzurum in August-September 1913 was an ominous sign for that matter. Now, the German consulate in Erzurum could easily coordinate these activities with another important centre for German reconnaissance, the German consulate in Tiflis, led by Consul Friedrich Schulenburg, who was well-connected with a network of agents and contacts with Russian officers. The areas where the German agents were concentrated were Abkhazia and Ajaria, where they were suspected of organizing an anti-Russian insurgent movement among the local Muslim populations.⁹²²

As these reports were circulating, in his report to the Tsar, the viceroy highlighted the numerical superiority of the Azeri population, their proximity to the neighbouring Muslim empires and their inclinations to religious fanaticism which made them a more viable candidate for potential trouble. In addition, the Balkan Wars contributed to the development of national consciousness among the Azeris.⁹²³ Although there were no imminent separatist actions among the Muslims, some measures needed to be taken. Vorontsov-Dashkov believed that the administration should not intervene in the religious affairs of the Muslims and their education needed to be improved. In their schools, the teaching personnel had to stay away from the pan-Islamist and pan-Turkist movement.⁹²⁴

The viceroy's account underlined the main Tsarist concerns about the pan-Islamist movement. The Russian perception of the pan-Islamist threat became even graver as the Germans intensified their activities in Eastern Anatolia, which were associated with the pan-Islamist network of emissaries in the South Caucasus. The net result of this was the worsening of the perception of the main Muslim element in the region, the Azeris, as the most imminent potential threat in the eyes of the viceroyalty. This was one of the reasons for keeping cordial relations with the Russian Armenians. The key to this was the

⁹²² Pipia, 35-6; Akopian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 50.

⁹²³ Vorontsov-Dashkov, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet za vosem let upravleniia Kavkazom*, 9.

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

Russian patronage for the Ottoman Armenians, which according to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 'in all fairness, had to be provided.'⁹²⁵

The Liman von Sanders Affair: From Crisis to Solution

The cautious and rather consistent Russian policy on its relations with the Ottoman Empire took a big hit with the crisis triggered by the Liman von Sanders mission.⁹²⁶ Demanded by the Ottoman government in May 1913, the mission included 41 German officers led by von Sanders, who would assume the role of army corps commander. The mission would oversee a comprehensive reorganization of the Ottoman army.⁹²⁷ The Russians were already aware of such a mission, which could be a harbinger of their nightmare concerning the Ottoman Empire: a German take-over.⁹²⁸ Primarily concerned with the status of the Straits, the Russians approached great powers during November 1913 to prevent such an outcome.⁹²⁹ However, when the mission arrived in Istanbul, Russia still did not have the assurances it sought.

Prior to the arrival of the German mission, Russia was happy to see the Ottoman Empire holding the Straits as Sazonov stated. However, the arrival of Sanders was interpreted as a means to 'change on the ownership of the Straits', with overtones on the fate of the Ottoman Empire, to which Russia could not stay indifferent.⁹³⁰ From early December 1913 on, the Russian Foreign Ministry was informing their allies about their uneasiness

⁹²⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁹²⁶ Igor V. Bestuzhev, 'Russian Foreign Policy February-June 1914,' *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 3 (July 1966): 105.

⁹²⁷ Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans* (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO, 2009), 237. For the details regarding how the German mission would help reorganization of the Ottoman army, please see Naim Turfan, *The Rise of the Young Turks. Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 312-20.

⁹²⁸ Sazonov, *Fateful Years*, 118-126.

⁹²⁹ Harry N. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History, 1913-1923* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1966), 39-41.

⁹³⁰ Zakher, 69-70.

with increasing urgency. For Sazonov, this was the test of sincerity for the Entente powers and decisive measures had to be taken. Otherwise, with Liman von Sanders at the command of army corps, 'the position of the German ambassador at Constantinople would be that of a virtual dictator.'⁹³¹

To determine the Russian course of action, a series of special conferences were organized by the Council of Ministers, in which the element of Russian military unreadiness in case of a general European war came up again. However, this time the Russians believed that they could not simply back off. On 23 December, Sazonov's report to the Tsar highlighted the potential troubles caused by the Liman crisis. The establishment of this mission would be a 'huge political defeat' for Russia and worse, it could create the impression both to the allies and others that Russia would do anything to keep the peace, which was dangerous for Russia and the Entente. An agreement with Germany could be secured by taking certain measures on the Ottoman Empire. Among his recommended measures was 'a temporary occupation of the Turkish ports or territory in Asia Minor like Trabzon or Bayezid' in a coordinated effort with the allied powers. Sazonov knew that these could result in a counter-reaction by Germany, which could lead to greater complications; however, Russia could not let Germany control the Straits.⁹³²

In another conference in early 1914, although some, like Sukhomlinov and Zhilinskii, declared that Russia was ready for a war, Kokovtsov's view that 'the war at the moment would be the biggest misery for Russia' prevailed. The lack of support by the allies for a proactive move also contributed to a more cautious Russian policy.⁹³³ Nevertheless, the Russian position on the Straits was reiterated to all relevant parties: Russia would not tolerate another power in the control of the Straits and would do anything to stop it.⁹³⁴

⁹³¹ O'Beirne to Grey, 9 December 1913, in Gooch, vol. 10, pt. 1, 365-6; O'Beirne to Grey, 18 December 1913, in *ibid.*, 389; Buchanan to Grey, 23 December 1913, in *ibid.*, 394.

⁹³² Ignatev, 192-3. The idea of occupation of the Ottoman ports, among other measures, was already discussed between the Russians and the British, although it must be noted that Sazonov told the British that he would not risk a war with Germany. O'Beirne to Grey, 9 December 1913, in Gooch, vol. 10, pt. 1, 365-6; O'Beirne to Grey, 18 December 1913, in *ibid.*, 389.

⁹³³ Ignatev, 192-3; Vladimir N. Kokovtsov, *Out of My Past: The Memoirs of Count Kokovtsov* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1935), 403.

⁹³⁴ Journal of the Special Conference, 8 February 1914 [21 February 1914], doc. no. 275, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 1, 373-91.

When the crisis started, the negotiations for the Armenian reforms had already been obstructed by the opposition of the Ottoman government. Kokovtsov admitted to the European press that the negotiation process was not progressing.⁹³⁵ Dissatisfied with the situation, Sazonov restated his constant warning to Turhan Pasha: the reforms with serious guarantees needed to be carried out whereby the Ottoman territorial integrity was guaranteed. If not, Russia would have to intervene to prevent any disturbances on her border owing to the considerable number of its Armenian subjects.⁹³⁶

As the mission arrived in Istanbul, the Russian perspective on the status of the Armenian reforms was shaped by its grander foreign policy interests. Admitting the critical situation, Girs noted that Russia could be drawn into war with the Ottoman Empire against its will.⁹³⁷ Meanwhile, Sazonov advocated for putting more pressure on the Ottoman government for the implementation of Armenian reforms. Whatever the outcome of this crisis would be, Russian imperial interests demanded the maintenance of Armenian loyalties, for which their policy on Armenian reforms was of immense importance.

It was particularly more so considering the increased German propaganda among Armenians to turn them against Russia by the end of 1913. A key character in this sense was the German general consul in Erzurum, Edgar Anders, an experienced agent in the affairs of the region. Apart from his role in the coordination of the Ottoman emissaries against Russia, he was also instructed by Berlin to divert Armenian sympathies from Russia to Germany and use them to undertake rebellion in the Caucasus.⁹³⁸ The German intelligence knew that Armenian sympathies for Russia were on the rise, and nothing was spared to stop this as the general-consul was given a considerable amount of funds to ensure that 'the Russian supremacy in Turkish Armenia was not established.'⁹³⁹ Another

⁹³⁵ 'M. Kokovtsoff in Paris,' *The European Outlook. The Times Saturday*, 8 November 1913; 'Russian Agreement with the Powers,' *The Times*, 12 November 1913.

⁹³⁶ Münir Süreyya Bey, *Ermeni Meselesinin Siyasi Tarihçesi (1877-1914)* (Ankara: Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2001), 109-110.

⁹³⁷ Girs to Sazonov, 1 December 1913, in *Entente Diplomacy and the World: Matrix of the History of Europe, 1909-14*, ed. George A. Schreiner (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921), 804.

⁹³⁸ Stepanian, 103; Akopian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 47; Lieven, *Russia and the Origins of the First World War*, 45.

⁹³⁹ Khachatur A. Badalian, *Turetsko-germanskaia expansiia v Zakavkaze (1914-1918)* (Erevan: Aiastan, 1980), 23.

consul at Mosul, Ebert Goldshtein, also did the same thing when in 1913 he visited the provinces of Diyarbakir, Bitlis and Van, where his main work was anti-Russian propaganda among the Armenians.⁹⁴⁰

On the negotiations of reforms, Sazonov stressed the need for a compromise. However, there was a limit to this and concessions could be interpreted by the Armenians as a lack of willingness on the Russian side. Under these circumstances, Sazonov noted that Russia would ‘persist on the realization of its reasonable demands regarding the Armenian question’; although this carried a level of risk of conflict that Russia had to take.⁹⁴¹ If pressuring the Ottoman Empire for the reforms did not work, the Russians feared that a rebellion in Eastern Anatolia in the spring of 1914 was a possibility. In such case, Russia could not stay indifferent because of this line of action would ‘transform the Armenian people to betrayers and open enemies of the Russian state.’ This, in turn, could result a surge in the combined revolutionary movement in Russia. Therefore, ‘if the Porte denied realization of our [Russian] demands, they had to actively prepare for the events, which could be followed with an offensive in the spring in the Armenian provinces.’⁹⁴² This was a more detailed version of Sazonov’s standard warning about Eastern Anatolia. Another motivation for the Russians was about the commercial benefits the Armenians would bring when the negotiations produced results. According to Sazonov, Russia could not compete with other Great Powers, which had already grabbed the lion’s share in the Ottoman Empire by means of economic concessions and investments. Lacking this, Russia needed to have good relations with the Ottoman Christians, primarily the Armenians, to close the gap.⁹⁴³

To show the Porte how serious the Russian concern for Armenian reforms, it was proposed to concentrate more Russian troops in the Caucasus.⁹⁴⁴ However, Sazonov made it clear that these military measures had to be carried out in absolute secrecy so that the Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers were not alerted and the Armenians were not given the impression of an armed Russian intervention. When the Russian forces were

⁹⁴⁰ Akopian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 47.

⁹⁴¹ Sazonov to Kokovtsov, 9 December 1913 [22 December 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, l. 47 ob.

⁹⁴² Ibid., ll. 48ob, 49.

⁹⁴³ Ibid., l. 48.

⁹⁴⁴ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 76.

ready, the Porte would be asked to comply with the Russian demands in such a way that the Porte would know that a rejection would mean an immediate Russian action. As Sazonov put it, 'This, in turn, could lead to extremely undesirable complications, to which, as it was mentioned above, they nevertheless could not stay indifferent.'⁹⁴⁵

Girs was reporting about the opening of the deadlock on the Armenian reforms; however it was still murky by late December.⁹⁴⁶ As the diplomatic crisis went on, the constant unrest in Eastern Anatolia was annoying the Russians. According to the Russian consulate reports, an important dimension of this unrest had to do with Muslim discontent over the reforms, which were followed by increased anti-Armenian propaganda and arming led by local CUP units.⁹⁴⁷ Against this background, Trubetskoi noted that 'the complications on the Turkish border could be caused by the rebellions in Armenia.'⁹⁴⁸

Under these circumstances, Sazonov instructed Girs to 'make the Porte the most decisive suggestion' on the potential consequences of failing to take appropriate measures to prevent disorder in Eastern Anatolia.⁹⁴⁹ He did the same to Turhan Pasha.⁹⁵⁰ Girs did what he was told but he reported the fragility of the situation in Istanbul as he wrote to Sazonov that Russia had to be ready 'for any eventuality,' even a war against Germany and the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁵¹ Acknowledging this, Sazonov noted that Russia had to be ready for events, including in the Armenian provinces, 'which could demand their intervention and bring more serious complications if Russia lacked the opportunity to

⁹⁴⁵ Sazonov to Kokovtsov, 9 December 1913 [22 December 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 47-49 ob; Somakian, 54.

⁹⁴⁶ Secret telegram of the Ambassador in Istanbul, 16 December 1913 [29 December 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 52-52 ob.

⁹⁴⁷ The General Consul in Erzurum Adamov to Girs, 7 December 1913 [20 December 1913], doc. no. 111, *Reformy v Armenii*, 125.

⁹⁴⁸ Journal of the Special Conference, 8 February 1914 [21 February 1914], doc. no. 275, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 1, 373-91.

⁹⁴⁹ Sazonov to Girs, 31 December 1913 [13 January 1914], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, l. 56.

⁹⁵⁰ Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 76.

⁹⁵¹ fn 4, doc. no. 9, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 1, 10-11.

take quick and decisive measures.’⁹⁵² This view was also embraced by the Minister of War, Sukhomlinov, and Kokovtsov.⁹⁵³

Meanwhile in the South Caucasus, the negative impact of the Liman affair on the progress of Armenian reforms was making the Russian Armenians unhappy. Aware of this, Vorontsov-Dashkov reminded the governors in the Caucasus that they should be very careful in dealing with the demonstrations organized by the Russian Armenians for their brethren across the border. The governors were ordered to emphasize that the Russian government was supporting the Ottoman Armenians. However, at the same time, the protestors needed to be reminded that in this internal matter of the Ottoman government with its Armenian subjects, Russia adopted a policy of ‘strict non-intervention.’ The governors were instructed to take measures which would indicate that the Russian government was sympathizing with the situation of the Ottoman Armenians not to cause any discontent among the Russian Armenians.⁹⁵⁴ The governors were told to allow demonstrations unless they were disrupting internal disorder and avoid any measures which would complicate Russia’s relations with the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁵⁵

Ultimately, stiff Russian opposition to the status of the mission and the diplomatic crisis it created forced the Ottoman government to back off. With the curtailment of the responsibilities of the mission and von Sanders, a frantic period at the Choristers’ Bridge ended. Soon, the Russian and German ambassadors convinced the Ottoman government to ink the agreement for Armenian reforms. According to the agreement, there would be two sectors with two General-Inspectors, who would oversee the local administration and were to be appointed by the Porte on the recommendation of the Great Powers. When the Ottoman Prime Minister, Said Halim Pasha, and the Russian chargé d’affaires in Istanbul, Konstantin N. Gulkevich, signed the agreement on 8 February, the Russian diplomatic

⁹⁵² Sazonov to Kokovtsov, 2 January 1914 [15 January 1914], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 53-53 ob; Sazonov to Kokovtsov, Sukhomlinov, Grigorievich and Zhilinskii, 2 January 1914 [15 January 1914], doc. no. 9, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 1, 10-11.

⁹⁵³ Sukhomlinov to Sazonov, 9 January 1914 [22 January 1914], doc. no. 84, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 1, 91-2; Kokovtsov to Sazonov, 11 January 1914 [24 January 1914], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 57-57 ob.

⁹⁵⁴ The viceroy of the Caucasus to all governors in the region, 10 January 1914 [23 January 1914], in *Dokumenty po Russkoi politike na Zakavkaze*, 157-8.

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid.

circles had a moment of relief as they averted a possible conflict which they did not really desire.⁹⁵⁶

When the Liman crisis broke out, the Armenian negotiation process was already stuck, which was annoying enough for Russia. As the diplomatic crisis escalated and the Russians believed that the Germans had arrived to take over the Ottoman Empire, they simultaneously began to act more firmly on the Armenian reforms because of the importance of both Ottoman and Russian Armenians for their international and domestic interests in this highly unstable environment. The increased German propaganda activity and the rising fears of a pan-Islamist campaign in the South Caucasus and across the border organized by Istanbul added another dimension to their level of firmness. Further complications were avoided with the compromise on the status of the mission and soon the reform agreement was signed, which marked a critical point for the relations between Russia and the Armenians, many of them believed that a new era was opened for them.

From the February Agreement to the Outbreak of the First World War (February 1914- July 1914)

Russia's Take on the Armenian Question in the Aftermath of the February Agreement

By February 1914, the complications about the German mission and the Armenian reforms were sorted out. In St. Petersburg, the Russian ministers convened again to discuss the strategy on the Straits and the general course of action regarding the Ottoman Empire on 8 February. Having witnessed the critical situation the Liman affair created, the participants discussed various scenarios about the Russian capabilities of capturing

⁹⁵⁶ For the full text of the reform agreement, see doc. no.147 in *Reformy v Armenii*, 158-65. Gulkevich signed the agreement because Girs was in St. Petersburg to take part in the special conferences of the Council of Ministers.

the Straits with a landing operation if a similar situation arose. It was agreed that such an operation could only succeed in the event of a general (European) war provided that the Russian Black Sea fleet and other military preparations were ready. The participants concluded that neither was Russia ready for a general war, nor its Black Sea fleet for a landing operation to capture the Straits and this would be the case for the near future. Thus, at the end of the conference, it was decided to take necessary measures to overcome these weaknesses in case another crisis broke out, particularly regarding the strengthening the Black Sea fleet.⁹⁵⁷ This policy went on until the outbreak of the Great War as the following meetings and the reports of the relevant agencies attested.⁹⁵⁸

Another Tsarist concern for a possible Ottoman complication was about Eastern Anatolia. Already beset by chronic unrest, the region would now receive a new set of railway lines to be built by the European capital. Against this threat which was directly related with the Russian security concerns in the South Caucasus, Russia got the concessions to build the lines close to its border. Moreover, as proposed by Sazonov in late 1913, the insufficiencies in the Caucasian railway network would be sorted out. Once these preparations were made, Russia would be ready for any sudden incidents in the region.⁹⁵⁹

Therefore, the basic tenets of the Russian policy on the Ottoman Empire remained intact even after a major crisis. The Liman crisis reminded that a major crisis in the Ottoman Empire, which could trigger its collapse and eventually a general war, was not unlikely. It also reminded of the Russian military and naval deficiencies and the difficulty of a Russian backing off in a major crisis because of the matters of power perception and

⁹⁵⁷ Nicolas de Basily (Nikolai A. Bazili), *Diplomat of Imperial Russia 1903-1917: Memoirs* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973), 92-3; Kornelii F. Shatsillo, *Ot Portsmutskogo mira k pervoi mirovoi voine, Generaly i politika* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2000), 80; Kostrikova, 302-3; D. Iu. Kozlov, 'Rossiiskie plany voyny na Chernom more I 'problema proliovov' 1907-1914 gg' *Voprosy istorii*, no. 8 (2007), 108; Avetian, *Russko-germanskie diplomaticheskie otnosheniia*, 232-3; Spring, 'Russian Foreign Policy, Economic Interests and the Straits Question, 1905-1914,' 218; Howard, 46. For a different perspective on the aims and the conclusion of this meeting and its aftermath see McMeekin, *The Russian Origins*, 33-36.

⁹⁵⁸ For instance, a conference in May 1914 reiterated the weakness of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and hence the need to avoid complications in the Straits. A month later, another report by the Naval General Staff pointed out that Russia could only be ready for such an operation by 1917 and repeated the need to stay out of a war. Iurii A. Pisarev, *Velikie derzhavy i Balkany nakanune pervoi mirovoi voyny* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985), 222; Shatsillo, *Ot Portsmutskogo mira*, 81.

⁹⁵⁹ Zakher; Oleg R. Airapetov, 'Na vostochnom napravlenii. Sudba Bosforskoj ekspeditsii v pravlenie imperatora Nikolaia II,' in *Posledniaia voina imperatorskoi Rossii: sbornik statei*, ed. Oleg R. Airapetov (Moscow: Tri kvadrata, 2002), 173; Zakher, 74.

prestige. The Russian course to avert the inevitable was to prepare as soon as possible and see what they could do to forestall a premature Ottoman collapse.⁹⁶⁰

A part of this policy was to establish better relations with the Ottoman Empire, which would also counter German influence.⁹⁶¹ An important aspect of this was about promoting better commercial relations with the Ottoman Empire, for which a Russian-Ottoman Friendship Society was founded.⁹⁶² In May 1914, an Ottoman delegation led by Talat Pasha visited Livadia. Talat asked Sazonov about a possible alliance, on which he also exchanged ideas with Girs. The ambassador was aware of the difficult situation Talat Pasha was in: neither the Triple Alliance nor the Entente wanted the Ottoman Empire as allies because 'nobody wanted a weak and a dependent country' as an ally. Although Talat Pasha's proposal did not produce any results, both Sazonov and Girs expressed that Russia wanted better relations with the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁶³ What Russia needed from the Ottoman Empire in mid-1914 was not an alliance but to sustain its existence without complicating things for Russia and having better relations could help for that.

The Russian position on the Ottoman Armenians was part of this and basically for the same reasons: to consolidate sympathies of the Ottoman and Russian Armenians and to make sure that Eastern Anatolia was politically stable, which was in line with the general tenets of the Russian foreign policy on the fate of the Ottoman Empire. The Russian Foreign Ministry believed that the implementation of Armenian reforms would be helpful for these aims. Thus, they were quite observant from February onward whether the Ottoman government was fulfilling its obligations about the reforms.⁹⁶⁴

The Russian position was made absolutely clear to Papadzhianov, who met with Girs and Trubetskoi in April. Stating the Russian priority of the Straits over the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Girs stressed the importance of maintaining the status-quo in the Ottoman Empire for the moment. Therefore, a possible annexation of the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire was not in line with Russian interests. What Girs

⁹⁶⁰ Buchanan to Grey, 3 April 1914, in Gooch, vol. 10, pt. 2, 780-82; Corrigan, 149.

⁹⁶¹ Bestuzhev, 'Russian Foreign Policy February-June 1914,' 110-1.

⁹⁶² Ibid.

⁹⁶³ Girs to Sazonov, 5 May 1914 [18 May 1914], doc. no. 27, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 3, 26-7.

⁹⁶⁴ Inclosure in Buchanan to Grey, 24 May 1914, Gooch, vol. 10, pt. 2, 794-97.

wanted from the Armenians was to avoid any annexation speculation or another complication, which could trigger an Ottoman collapse and a European war, something Russia did not favour at the moment.⁹⁶⁵

Girs also expressed the Russian disapproval of Armenian autonomy since this could also result in another unfavourable outcome, an increased influence of another Great Power (i.e. Germany) in 'Ottoman Armenia.' Russia would continue its support for the Armenians by monitoring the realization of the Armenian reforms.⁹⁶⁶ In St. Petersburg, Trubetskoi expressed similar views to Papadzhanov: 'At the moment, I would consider beautiful slogans about [Armenian] autonomy or annexation dangerous and provocative.' In light of Ottoman and German suspicions about Russian intentions regarding annexation, absolute caution was necessary in order to demonstrate that Russia did not have such intentions.⁹⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the Russian diplomatic corps were concerned with the slow progress on reforms and the Armenian complaints about it. In March 1914, Sazonov had already revealed the Russian position in the aftermath of the reform agreement. He told that 'the Armenians should be convinced that Russia did not have the intentions to annex Turkish Armenia or to form a buffer state or an autonomous province.' What the Russians desired were peace and order in region and good treatment of the Armenians. A considerable number of Russian Armenians were 'representing a fully loyal and desirable element' but they were worried about the fate of their brethren across the border. Therefore, Russia would not 'tolerate disorder in Armenia or inside Russian borders.'⁹⁶⁸ In May and June, the Catholicos and Boghos Nubar Pasha, who expressed their concerns to St. Petersburg about lack of progress about the reforms, were informed that Russia would continue its support for the Ottoman Armenians and make sure that the reforms would be carried out properly.⁹⁶⁹

⁹⁶⁵ Tunian, *Mladoturki i armianskii vopros*, vol. 2, 390-91.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid., 391-2.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid., 395.

⁹⁶⁸ Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 138.

⁹⁶⁹ Tunian, *Mladoturki i armianskii vopros*, vol. 2, 439-45.

Apart from the sluggish progress on the reforms, the German efforts in Eastern Anatolia and South Caucasus had attracted the attention of the Russians. The Germans were trying to enhance their influence on the Armenians by setting up a German-Armenian society in February 1914 to publicize the German interest in the fate of the Armenians. Soon, several prominent members of the Russian Armenian bourgeoisie were sent to Berlin to counter the influence of this society.⁹⁷⁰ Vorontsov-Dashkov was wary of the German presence and he noted that the Germans were trying to win over the Armenians by promising to help them for their aspirations to unification. He added that although Russian influence on the Ottoman Armenians was prevailing at the moment, the attitude of the Armenian leaders could change and caution was necessary against the German threat.⁹⁷¹

Another key element for the Russian position in the Armenian question was about the Kurds. The proposals of the Kurdish chiefs offering their loyalties to the Russians kept coming. However, the Russians restricted their promises to individual relations and refrained from supporting the Kurdish chiefs that offered a general rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. For instance, in the spring of 1914, the Russians declined the proposal by the Khan of Maku to stage a rebellion in the Ottoman Empire with coordination of the Armenians.⁹⁷² Although the Russian desire to gain influence among the Kurds was obvious, they were aware of the difficulties it created for their relations with the Armenians.

Noting the offers of various Kurdish chiefs, the viceroy also asserted that ‘an exclusive influence on the Kurds could be obtained by a sensible policy.’ Despite the annoyance of both Ottoman and Russian Armenians, the viceroy believed that Russian foreign policy interests required expanding Russian influence on the Kurds against the German efforts

⁹⁷⁰ Badalian, 22; Pipia, 44; Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 151.

⁹⁷¹ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Sazonov, 28 May 1914 [10 June 1914], doc. no. 203, in *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 3, 248-50.

⁹⁷² Lazarev, 237.

in the region.⁹⁷³ Concerning this dilemma, he asserted that the attempts of rapprochement between the Kurds and Armenians would be welcomed.⁹⁷⁴

Relations between the Russian Administration and the Armenian Church, the Armenian Bourgeoisie and the Dashnaks after the February Agreement

‘New horizons were opening up before the nation, which had the right to expect a bright future. The signing of the agreement, although an important success in itself, was not everything.’⁹⁷⁵ As the Patriarch Zaven stated, although the agreement on the Armenian reforms did not meet all the demands of the Armenians, it was certainly considered a big step and the Ottoman Armenians were hopeful about it. The Armenian Patriarch then expressed his gratitude to the Tsar, Sazonov, and Girs for their efforts for the first step ‘to save them from the Turkish yoke.’⁹⁷⁶ Similarly, the Armenian National Assembly in Istanbul and the majority of the Armenian political parties also cheered for the Russian assistance. Gulkevich was even more hopeful of the potential returns of the Russian support for Armenian reforms. In a prophetic manner, Gulkevich noted that ‘when the historical fate of Russia brought her to Istanbul, she would rely on 200,000 Armenian population of Istanbul in its inevitable war with the Greek element.’⁹⁷⁷

A key character in the initiation of the reform process and its aftermath, Kevork V was pleased since his efforts produced results with the backing of the Russian government. The Catholicos expressed his gratitude to the Tsar on behalf of his people. By the grace of his beloved Monarch Sovereign, ‘the Armenian people once again were called into the historical arena as the only element, which was able to implement the European religious

⁹⁷³ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Sazonov, 28 May 1914 [10 June 1914], doc. no. 203, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 3, 248-50; Vorontsov-Dashkov to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, April 1914, SSSA, f. 13, o. 28, d. 125, ll. 3-9.

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid. For that purpose, Abdurrezzak Bedrkhan met prominent Armenians in St. Petersburg through Russian authorities in March 1914. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires*, 77.

⁹⁷⁵ Zaven Der Yeghiayan, *My Patriarchal Memoirs* (Barrington: Mayreni Publishing, 2002), 27.

⁹⁷⁶ Gulkevich to Sazonov, 27 January 1914 [9 February 1914], *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 1, 210.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid.

and material culture in Asiatic Turkey.’⁹⁷⁸ Boghos Nubar Pasha also thanked the Russian government, to which the Armenians owed foremost for the materialization of the reforms.⁹⁷⁹ Khatisian and other members of the Armenian bourgeoisie expressed their joy to the viceroy in the initial aftermath of the agreement. The next step was about how to make the most of these projected reforms both politically and economically. They believed that there was a mutually beneficial angle for them and the Russian imperial interests to pull this off.

To close the gap with other Great Powers’ economic influence on the Ottoman Empire, the eastern provinces under the reform project was a great opportunity. Thus, the Armenians were seen as their potential intermediaries for this sort of enterprise as Trubetskoi puts it: ‘The Armenian reforms would be helpful not only in Armenia itself but also in Russian economic expansion in the Ottoman realm.’⁹⁸⁰ To this end, the Russian government was discussing the establishment of banks, mainly with Russian capital and administration, in the Ottoman Empire with branches in Istanbul and Eastern Anatolia, which could be also beneficial for the Russian Armenians.

The Armenian bourgeoisie was also interested in expanding its influence in Eastern Anatolia. The meetings of the representatives of Armenian industrialists and financiers in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Tiflis were hopeful about the commercial and agricultural opportunities. In the national congress in Tiflis in May 1914, an Armenian bank with 3 million roubles of capital in Ottoman Armenia was one of the demands of the influential Russian Armenian entrepreneurs.⁹⁸¹ Mantashev’s Commercial Bank had already proposed to establish a bank in Eastern Anatolia earlier. In the branches of this bank, the Russian Armenians would be employed. However, the Mantashevs demanded the protection of the bank by the Russian government and the monopoly in the region. At first, Sazonov found this proposal beneficial for Russian economic interests in the area since it would attract Russian Armenian entrepreneurs but asked for an overview.⁹⁸² After

⁹⁷⁸ Catholicos to Nicholas II, 16 April 1914 [29 April 1914], *Reformy v Armenii*, doc. no. 158, 178-180.

⁹⁷⁹ Bayur, vol. 2, pt. 3, 182; Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 175.

⁹⁸⁰ Akdes N. Kurat, *Türkiye ve Rusya: XVII. Yüzyıl Sonundan Kurtuluş Savaşına Kadar Türk-Rus İlişkileri 1798-1919* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1970), 212.

⁹⁸¹ Kirakosian, *Zapadnaia Armeniia*, 188.

⁹⁸² Sazonov to Girs, 5 March 1914 [18 March 1914], doc. no. 39, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 2, 40-1.

due consideration, the project was rejected since an exclusively Armenian bank could lead to political complications in the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁸³ Instead, a Russo-Asiatic Bank (with French-Russian capital), to which the Armenian entrepreneurs could also join, would be a better fit.⁹⁸⁴ Although, this was not exactly what the Russian Armenian financiers wanted, good relations between the Russian administration and the Armenian bourgeoisie continued.

An important reason for this had to do with the Tsarist fears of a continued pan-Islamist threat in the South Caucasus, which was assisted by Germany. Anders was reported to orchestrate the activities of the Ottoman consuls in the Caucasus (mainly in Tiflis and Kars) through Ottoman spies. He visited the Caucasus in February 1914 himself, arousing the Russian suspicions to new heights. In July 1914, the Tiflis gendarmerie reported that he was in the South Caucasus to organize an uprising among the local Muslim population.⁹⁸⁵ This fear led to the formulation of an official Russian perception that every German in the area had to be a secret agent.⁹⁸⁶

In 1914, there were reports pointing out that the pan-Islamist movement was failing to achieve its aims in Russian Empire and the Caucasus. The Muslim masses, with the exception of certain individuals, remained indifferent to the propaganda of the pan-Islamist emissaries.⁹⁸⁷ Those emissaries believed that the main reason for their failure was 'the uncultured Muslims, ignorance of their clergy and the presence of sects among the Muslims.'⁹⁸⁸ The same failure was noted in a special conference of the Council of Ministers on Muslim affairs in 1914. The participants of the conference also stressed that

⁹⁸³ Derek W. Spring, 'Russian imperialism in Asia in 1914,' *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 20, no. 3-4 (1979): 314.

⁹⁸⁴ Sazonov to Girs, 4 July 1914 [17 July 1914], doc. no. 76, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 4, 118; Girs to Sazonov, 7 July 1914 [20 July 1914], doc. no. 122, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 4, 167; Girs to Sazonov, 4 July 1914 [17 July 1914], doc. no. 84, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 4, 128.

⁹⁸⁵ Anders declared that the aim of his recent visit was to collect butterflies. Quite unfortunate for him, he was in the wrong place in the wrong time as the war broke out. On the orders of Vorontsov-Dashkov, Anders and the captain accompanying him were arrested in August 1914. Sarkisian, *Ekspansionistskaia politika*, 122.

⁹⁸⁶ The Russian intelligence was on guard against German espionage in the South Caucasus. In May 1914, a group of German tourists asked for permission to travel around Ararat and Lake Sevan, which according to the Russian intelligence was a 'reconnaissance mission.' The Caucasus was believed to be full of German agents. Badalian, 22.

⁹⁸⁷ Sarkisian, *Ekspansionistskaia politika*, 116-7.

⁹⁸⁸ The Head of Secret Service in Turkey to the Director of the Department of Police, 10 April 1914 [23 April 1914], GARF, f. 529, o. 1. d. 14, ll. 10-11.

the Muslim question should not be equated with the pan-Islamic threat. Although the perception of the pan-Islamist threat began to be put into a more realistic perspective by the Tsarist authorities, 'the spectre of pan-Islamism' as Vorobeve puts it, was still there and the perception of this threat continued to affect the actual policies of the Russian government and the viceroyalty until the outbreak of the Great War.⁹⁸⁹

Compared with the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie, the perspective of the Dashnaks on the Armenian negotiations was more complicated. The view of the party members on Russia was still divided but the party continued its abstinence from revolutionary activity in Russia. Some members were suspicious of the ultimate Russian intentions behind their support for Armenian reforms and some like Aknouni went further and accused Russia and its 'untalented diplomats' of the complications in the Ottoman Empire. According to Aknouni, Charykov was not a diplomat and 'stupid' Girs was even worse and 'all Europe laughed at Russia.'⁹⁹⁰ However, the party considered the situation of the Ottoman Armenians and the reforms their priority, for which Russian support was essential. Thus, despite the sceptics, the party generally was in favour of the Russian policy and tried not to antagonize it.⁹⁹¹ Sazonov believed that Armenian sympathies toward Russia grew because of the wise policies of the viceroy and all Armenian parties, even extreme groups like the Dashnaks, were putting their hopes on Russia for the fate of their people.⁹⁹²

Meanwhile, the bottleneck in the negotiations bought the CUP time to ask Dashnaks for collaboration. The main demand of the CUP from the Dashnaks was about the European supervision of Armenian reforms. In return, they would meet their political demands regarding civil rights, the number of Armenian deputies in the Ottoman Parliament and the protection from the Kurds. Blaming Russia for its expansionist designs on Turkish Armenia, Said Halim Pasha asked the Dashnaks to repudiate the reform project. However, the offer of the CUP was not accepted. The CUP continued to try to convince

⁹⁸⁹ Elena I. Vorobeve, 'Musulmanskii vopros v imperskoi politike Rossiiskogo samoderzhavii: vtoraiia polovina XIX veka – 1917 g.,' (PhD diss., Academy of Sciences, Institute of Russian History, St Petersburg, 1999), 162.

⁹⁹⁰ The Head of the Secret Service in Turkey to the Head of OO DP Broetskii, 4 January 1914 [17 January 1914], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 12, ll. 1-1 ob.

⁹⁹¹ Gasimov, 467.

⁹⁹² Sazonov to Kokovtsov, 9 December 1913 [22 December 1913], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 47 ob-48.

the Dashnaks in late 1913 and early 1914 by holding informal meetings with them. In various ways, the CUP participants asked the Armenian participants to handle this together without including foreign powers. Russia was particularly seen as the main instigator behind the scenes and the CUP delegates were warning the Armenians not to be part of expansionary policies of Russia.⁹⁹³ There was a lack of confidence on both sides and given their political priorities and the surrounding international situation, these meetings did not produce any tangible results.

Meanwhile in this uncertain atmosphere, the Dashnaks continued to transfer arms and personnel to Eastern Anatolia, noted by not only the Russians but also the Ottoman and German authorities.⁹⁹⁴ According to a secret police report, the Ottoman Armenians were armed enough to resist a Kurdish onslaught.⁹⁹⁵ The demands of the Russian Armenians from the Russian authorities to allow low levels of transportation of arms into the Ottoman border were finally granted by Sazonov. This would alleviate some of the dissatisfaction of the Russian Armenians but they were strictly ordered by the viceroy that they should avoid any activities which could disrupt stability in the Caucasus.⁹⁹⁶

Shortly after the agreement, Gulkevich believed that this ‘diplomatic triumph’ would strengthen the relations of the Russian Armenians with Russia and ‘prevent them from falling into the ranks of their [Russian] extreme parties.’⁹⁹⁷ Gulkevich proved to be right as improved relations, in turn, ameliorated the Dashnak view of Tsarist policy. In the deliberations of the Dashnak party council, which met in Berlin in March 1914, it was stated that the anti-Armenian drive of the Russian government had stopped at the end of 1911 and the Dashnaktsutun was not persecuted as a matter of Russian policy. Russian rule was ‘incomparably better’ than the Turkish arbitrariness, and although it was not

⁹⁹³ Rober Koptaş, ‘Zohrab, Papazyan ve Pasternadjian [Armen Garo]’ın Kalemlelerinden 1914 Ermeni Reformu ve İttihatçı-Taşnak Müzakereleri,’ in *İmparatorluğun Çöküş Döneminde Osmanlı Ermenileri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 159-64; Kevorkian, 164; Avagyan, 125; Menteşe, 175.

⁹⁹⁴ Aksakal, 74-5; Hikmet Özdemir, ‘Seferberlik İlanından Rus İşgaline Kadar Ermeni Milislerle Çatışmalar,’ in *Türk-Ermeni İlişkilerinin Gelişimi ve 1915 Olayları Uluslararası Sempozyumu Bildirileri* (Ankara: Gazi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi, 2006), 111.

⁹⁹⁵ The Head of the Gendarmerie of Tiflis to DP OO, 13 January 1914 [26 January 1914], GARF, f. 102, OO (1913), o. 243, d. 14 (obshch. prod.), ll. 78-78 ob.

⁹⁹⁶ Vorontsov-Dashkov to Sazonov, 17 January 1914 [30 January 1914], RGIA, f. 1276, o. 8, d. 668, ll. 59-59 ob.

⁹⁹⁷ Gulkevich to Sazonov, 27 January 1914 [9 February 1914], doc. no. 210, *MO*, ser. 3, vol. 1, 259.

ideal, it did not require the use of terror.⁹⁹⁸ Indeed, the Dashnak threat in the South Caucasus was minimized, for which Vorontsov-Dashkov was pleased as he wrote to the Tsar that political parties in the region were either liquidated or lost their significance since active members of those had been sentenced by courts or dealt with other administrative measures.⁹⁹⁹ The friction between the Dashnaks and Russia was fading as the Dashnaks were channelling their energies for the Ottoman Armenians.

Soon, the improvement of the relations between the Dashnaks and the Russian government was reinforced as the Catholicos wrote to the viceroy in May about a possible imperial pardon for the remaining Dashnak trial convicts. The Catholicos downplayed anti-governmental activity of the party, which was primarily against the Azeris in 1905-6, and asked the viceroy for help.¹⁰⁰⁰ To the joy of the Dashnaks, the Tsar granted imperial pardon for the remaining convicts who received the harshest sentences. Most of them were released from the prison, and the remaining Dashnaks' punishments were reduced. Hard labour sentences were changed to administrative exile or right to live anywhere in the empire excluding the capital and capital provinces for five years.¹⁰⁰¹ After the pardon, Boghos Nubar Pasha's letter particularly reminded the Dashnaks that 'the reforms were dependent not on the European great powers but on Russia at the moment' and no action against Russia should be taken. Papadzhanian even went further and urged the Dashnaks to negotiate with the SRs and proclaim that the party would not take any action against Nicholas II.¹⁰⁰²

Conclusion

When the Great War broke out, the Dashnaks were holding their eighth annual congress in Erzurum, where the party's line in a possible general war was already on the agenda.

⁹⁹⁸ The Department of Police to the Head of Secret Service in Turkey, GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 12, l. 15.

⁹⁹⁹ Jones, *Socialism under Georgian Colors*, 238.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Catholicos to Vorontsov-Dashkov, 19 April 1914 [2 May 1914], SSSA, f. 13, o. 29, d. 227, ll. 1 ob-2.

¹⁰⁰¹ 'Mestnyi otdel,' *Tiflisskii listok*, 27 June 1914 [10 July 1914].

¹⁰⁰² To the Head of the Secret Service in Turkey, 9 July 1914 [22 July 1914], GARF, f. 529, o. 1, d. 12, l. 28-28 ob.

The congress decided to stay neutral, which meant that in case of a Russian-Ottoman war, all of its members would assume their civic obligations. Soon after, a CUP delegation arrived in Erzurum and asked their former allies about a daring plan which involved undertaking a joint rebellion against Russia. The Dashnak delegation refused the offer and the party immediately organized successive meetings in Istanbul to evaluate the situation. The situation was very complicated for the Armenia Bureau, the party's responsible body in the Ottoman Armenia, since any decision they would make about party's stance on war could complicate the situation of not only the party but also the Ottoman Armenians.¹⁰⁰³

When the representatives of the Armenian Bureau came to Tiflis in September 1914 to discuss with the party's Eastern Bureau, they saw none of the prudent line taken by the Ottoman Armenian political actors. There was general enthusiasm for a war against the Ottoman Empire among the Russian Armenians. It was not only the Eastern Bureau that cheered for war. The Armenian National Bureau, led by Khatisian, was the leading political actor that was pressing the Russian authorities to declare war on the Ottoman Empire. Encouraged by the Armenian National Bureau, the Catholicos asked the Tsar to 'take under his benevolent wings the suffering Turkish Armenians, to protect their lives and property, and to guarantee the implementation of the reform project.'¹⁰⁰⁴ This overly enthusiastic situation alerted even Vorontsov-Dashkov, who asked the Catholicos not to take any action which could complicate Tsarist interests without the approval of the Russian authorities.

This scene in August-September 1914 was the manifestation of the gradual improvement of the relations between the Russian government and the Russian Armenians. Earlier it was the domestic concerns that were decisive in their relationship but from 1912 onward, it was the international dynamics, particularly the situation of the Ottoman Armenians and the Ottoman Empire. The revival of the question of Armenian reforms in late 1912 was considered by the Russians to be a useful policy for expanding Russian influence on

¹⁰⁰³ For more details on this congress, see my forthcoming article 'The Eighth World Congress of the Dashnaksutun and Its Aftermath (July-August 1914),' in *War and Collapse: World War I and the Ottoman State*, eds. M. Hakan Yavuz and Feroz Ahmad (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, forthcoming).

¹⁰⁰⁴ Quoted in Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence*, 43.

the Ottoman Armenians, maintaining stability in Eastern Anatolia, and satisfying the demands of the Russian Armenian bourgeoisie and the Catholicos. Even the Dashnaks, who were decimated in the recent trial, were cautious not to antagonize Russia due to their support for the Ottoman Armenians.

As the defeats in the Balkan Wars made the situation in Eastern Anatolia more critical, the Russian Armenians continued to appeal to the Russian authorities for their brethren across the border. Both St. Petersburg and Tiflis agreed to render assistance however; it had to wait until the end of the conflicts in the Balkans. What the Russian authorities did not need was an Armenian unrest, which could lead to complications not only in Eastern Anatolia but also in the South Caucasus.

When negotiations for the Armenian reforms began in the aftermath of the First Balkan War, the Russian perspective regarding the Ottoman Armenians and the Ottoman Empire remained unchanged. The Russian participation in the negotiations helped Russia counter rising German influence, postpone the untimely Ottoman collapse and garner Armenian sympathies. The viceroy was aware that the Russian Armenians needed to be given more substantial guarantees for help for the Ottoman Armenians. Given the Russian fears of growing pan-Islamist movement in the South Caucasus, now orchestrated by the Germans, and increased labour unrest in 1913, the support of the Armenian bourgeoisie and the Armenian Church could not be risked.

The Liman affair was considered by the Tsarist Foreign Ministry a direct threat for the basic tenets of Russian imperial interests regarding the Ottoman Empire. Worried that the mission was a signal for a German take-over, Russia pressured the Ottoman government to reduce the responsibilities of the German mission. In the meantime, both Sazonov and Girs reiterated their warning of a Russian military intervention into Eastern Anatolia if the reforms were not implemented. Soon, the diplomatic crisis ended and the Armenian reforms agreement was signed.

All political layers within the Russian Armenians were thankful for the Russian role in this. The Catholicos, who acted as asked by the viceroy during the process, was jubilant. His prestige among the Russian and Ottoman Armenians was bolstered as he was one of

the initiators of the reform project. This was why Vorontsov-Dashkov and Izvolskii opposed Stolypin's proposal to curtail the privileges of the Catholicos in 1908. With an obedient Catholicos, like Kevork V, Echmiadzin could be a useful tool for the Russian government in its dealings with the Armenians.

The members of the Armenian bourgeoisie were thankful to their Sovereign, who assisted their coreligionists across the border. Outplacing the decimated Dashnaks, they were now the leading political, economic and cultural force among the Russian Armenians and one of the key factors in the politics of the South Caucasus. With the signing of the agreement, they were considered to be useful for expanding Russian commercial interests in Eastern Anatolia, a mutually beneficial deal. As for the Dashnaks, despite the opposition of some of its members to Russia, the party avoided active confrontation with Russia. Since they lost their powerbase in the Caucasus and prioritized the Ottoman Armenians, this was understandable. As they continued their activities on transfer of arms and personnel through the Ottoman border, the Dashnaks were not persecuted by the Tsarist police as they were used to. The ultimate token regarding the improvement of the relations came on the eve of the war. The remaining convicts of the Dashnak trial, on the demand of the Catholicos and approval of the viceroy, received an imperial pardon from the Tsar in July 1914. Thus by then, all of the convicts of the Dashnak trial were pardoned (only those who received hard labour were sent to administrative exile) and the prosecutor of their trial, Lyzhin, was declared insane, which was a kind of rehabilitation of the party. This was indeed an interesting turn of events considering what Dashnaks had experienced in the Russian Empire after 1907.

CONCLUSION

Hovhannes Tumanian, the national poet of Armenia, was born in 1869 in a village in the province of Tiflis. His father was a priest and was of hereditary nobility—two qualities typically appreciated by the Tsarist establishment in the South Caucasus since 1828.¹⁰⁰⁵ Tumanian started his education in the local parish school and later went on to Nersesian seminary in Tiflis in 1883, both run by the Armenian Church.¹⁰⁰⁶ This was the period when the Russian government was implementing restrictive measures on the Armenian Church as part of its Russification campaign, which Tumanian experienced first-hand. It was soon followed by the emergence of the Armenian revolutionary circles in the late 1880s and the early 1890s, when members of the Armenian intelligentsia, like Tumanian, became acquainted with the ideas of the Hnchaks and later the Dashnaks. Although the Russian authorities grew more suspicious about the intentions of the Russian Armenians and put additional restrictions on the Armenian Church and other Armenian institutions, Tumanian and other Armenian revolutionaries still mainly concentrated their efforts on the liberation of the Ottoman Armenians. In the meantime, Tumanian was making a name for himself with his poems and novels, which touched upon the themes of patriotism and Armenian folklore among other subjects.¹⁰⁰⁷

Now a well-known figure among the Armenian intelligentsia in Tiflis, Tumanian witnessed the worsening relations between the Russian authorities and the Russian Armenians, which culminated in the confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church in 1903. From then on, a total Armenian rebellion against Russia began and soon, it intermingled with the revolutionary turmoil in 1905. With the annulment of the

¹⁰⁰⁵ Reference of the Tiflis Okhrana, 8 May 1909 [21 May 1909], SSSA, f. 95, o. 1, d. 31, ll. 363-363 ob.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Agop J. Hacikyan, ed., *The Heritage of Armenian Literature: From the Eighteenth Century to Modern Times*, vol. 3 (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2005), 619.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Tumanian's *Sasuntsi Davit* (David of Sasun) (1902) and *Tmkaberdi arume* (The Capture of Fort Tmuk)(1902) are such examples. Hacikyan, 621.

confiscation decree in August 1905, the anti-government sentiment among the Armenians abated but there was another problem. It was the bloody clashes with the Azeris and as a member of the Dashnaktsutiun, Tumanian assumed organizational responsibilities during the clashes, for which he mainly blamed the Tsarist authorities.

The clashes and the general revolutionary unrest in the region ended toward 1907 as a general recovery in the empire was taking place. Meanwhile, Stolypin and Vorontsov-Dashkov were discussing as to how to deal with the Armenians as the most troublesome nationality in the region. For both of them, a big part of this had to do with the strength of the Dashnaktsutiun in the South Caucasus and soon a mass political trial of the party was initiated in 1908, which shook the lives of many Russian Armenians, including Tumanian. Charged with being a member of the central committee of the Dashnaktsutiun in Tiflis and taking part in the organization of armed operations of the party, Tumanian became one of the key targets of the Tsarist raids in late 1908.¹⁰⁰⁸ Parts of Tumanian's poem 'Old Struggle', which he wrote to depict the miseries of the Ottoman Armenians were lost during the Tsarist raids.¹⁰⁰⁹ Soon after, Tumanian was arrested and was put into Metekhi prison. Although he was released later, it did not take long for the Tsarist authorities to arrest him again in 1911 on similar charges. Tumanian was among the 159 members of the Dashnaktsutiun, who would appear in the final session of the trial in St. Petersburg in early 1912 on the charges of committing crimes against the state.

Although Tumanian and his fellow Dashnaks were complaining about the persecution of the party by Russia, the fortunes of the party were not getting any better in the Ottoman and Persian empires. By 1912, the party had lost its hopes in the Persian constitutional revolution and broke off with the CUP in the Ottoman Empire. At about the same time, Tumanian was standing in the final session of the Dashnak trial, which surprisingly ended with the forgery scandal and mass acquittals, including Tumanian. Not long after he returned to Tiflis, Tumanian was now depicting Russia as the patron of all Armenians and supporting an active Russian policy regarding the Ottoman Armenians.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Reference of the Tiflis Okhrana, 8 May 1909 [21 May 1909], SSSA, f. 95, o. 1, d. 31, ll. 363-363 ob.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Konstantin S. Khudaverdian, ed., *Armianskii vopros. Entsiklopediia* (Erevan: Glavnaia redaktsiia Armianskoi entsiklopedii, 1991), 318.

As the Russians began to show an active interest in the Ottoman Armenians, Tumanian became a member of the Armenian National Bureau, which was formed under the auspices of the Catholicos and the approval of the Russian government. For the Russian authorities, the Catholicosate was now an obedient institution at home and abroad that fervently supported the Tsarist line to the letter—a total contrast from the situation in 1907 when Stolypin considered it the centre of Armenian sedition against Russia in 1907. Similarly, by 1912, the Armenian bourgeoisie was considered not the financiers of the Armenian revolutionaries but the natural ally of the Tsarist regime in the South Caucasus, where the Russian officials had bigger concerns, like the threat of the pan-Islamist movement.

Tumanian's life under Russian rule epitomizes how the fortunes of the Russian Armenians changed from the 1870s to 1914. The evolution of relations between 1903 and 1914 was a big part of this change. By late 1912, the Armenian political pillars in the South Caucasus made their peace with Russia. In return, the Russian authorities were no longer oblivious to the demands of the Russian Armenians for a more active policy regarding the Ottoman Armenians. In the 1890s, Russia had serious concerns about the Armenian aspirations. Thus, when complications arose in 1894-1896 in the Ottoman Empire, with which Russia had an understanding at the time, an active Russian policy of interference was out of the question despite the appeals of the Russian and Ottoman Armenians. When the Red Cross approached the Russian Dowager Empress for a donation to the victims of the Armenian massacres of 1894-1896, the Empress refused.¹⁰¹⁰

However, Russia's response to the outcries of the Russian Armenians in late 1912 was radically different owing to its better relations with its own Armenians and new Russian foreign policy concerns about the Ottoman Empire. Led by Sazonov, the Russian diplomatic corps increasingly pressured the Ottoman Empire to listen to the demands of the Ottoman Armenians, which produced results in February 1914 with the signing of the reform agreement. As a result, from late 1912 to the outbreak of the First World War, the

¹⁰¹⁰ Roy Douglas, 'Britain and the Armenian Question, 1894-7,' *The Historical Journal* 19, no. 1 (March 1976), 126.

relations between the Russian administration and the Russian Armenians further solidified. In early August 1914, just after the outbreak of the Great War, the Catholicos was assuring the viceroy of the loyalty of both Ottoman and Russian Armenians, who 'remained unshakably firm in their loyalty to the great Russian state.'¹⁰¹¹ In the meantime, led by Khatisian, the Russian Armenian bourgeoisie was cheering for a war with the Ottoman Empire.

This was a far cry from the disastrous relations in 1903, when the Armenians were up in arms against the Russian regime after the decision of confiscation of the properties of the Armenian Church. This study has accounted for how and why this change took place between 1903 and 1914 by looking at the relations between the Russian authorities and the main political pillars of the Russian Armenians: the Armenian Church, the Armenian bourgeoisie and, the Dashnaksutiun. It has argued that from 1903 to 1912, the dominant factor in the gradual change of the relations was the domestic concerns of the Russian administration in the South Caucasus. From 1912 to the outbreak of the war, this was replaced with the Russian foreign policy interests regarding the Ottoman Empire. In line with the change of relations, from 1903 to 1912, the dominant Armenian image in Russian eyes changed from 'the dissident revolutionary' to the most suitable ally in the region, which could further Russian interests on both sides of the border. What happened between late 1912 and August 1914 reinforced this change as the relations between the Russian administration and the Russian Armenians further improved in the face of changing international dynamics revolving around the fate of the Ottoman Empire and the Ottoman Armenians.

The first chapter has traced the relations between the Russian administration in the Caucasus and the Russian Armenians between 1903 and 1907. By focusing on the reaction by the Armenian masses, the Armenian clergy, and the Dashnaksutiun against the Tsarist decision of confiscation in 1903, this chapter has put the Armenian unrest that erupted in the aftermath of the confiscation decision in the broader context of the revolution of 1905 in the South Caucasus. The Armenian unrest was one of the reasons

¹⁰¹¹ Catholicos Kevork V to the viceroy of the Caucasus, Vorontsov-Dashkov, 5 August 1914 [18 August 1914], doc. no. 136 in Nersisian, *Genotsid armian*, 272-274.

for the weakening of the Tsarist hold in the region during the revolutionary turmoil, which produced several tragic memories for the Armenians and Azeris during the bloody inter-ethnic conflict in 1905-1906.

In 1905, Vorontsov-Dashkov had to leave his residence at the English Embankment in the capital for the viceroy's palace in Tiflis upon the request of the Tsar.¹⁰¹² With his arrival in Tiflis as the viceroy of the Caucasus and the annulment of the confiscation decree, St. Petersburg signalled a policy change regarding its position vis-à-vis the Russian Armenians. As the region stabilized and the Armenian-Azeri clashes abated toward 1907, the regime's relations with the Armenian Church and the Armenian bourgeoisie improved from the days of 1903. As demonstrated in the first chapter, in this period, the Dashnaktsutiun became stronger in the South Caucasus mainly because of its role during the Armenian opposition to the Tsarist authorities in 1903-1905, and during the Armenian-Azeri clashes in 1905-1906. More alarmingly, the Dashnaks had now close links with the broader Russian revolutionary parties, which ultimately led to their inclusion in the Second International in 1907.

By 1907, both St. Petersburg and Tiflis had serious concerns about the capabilities of the Dashnaks. However, there was no complete agreement between Stolypin and Vorontsov-Dashkov on how to handle this. In the end, Stolypin opted out for a mass political trial of the party, which was an extreme measure in the eyes of the viceroy. Until the end of its final session in 1912, the trial of the Dashnaktsutiun became a key aspect for the relations between Russia with its Armenians. The second chapter has explained how the Dashnak organization in the South Caucasus was crushed by the trial and why the party had to transfer its forces to the Persian and Ottoman Empires, where they took part in the constitutional movements. As the Dashnak presence in the South Caucasus significantly faded, so did the Armenian image of 'dissident revolutionary' in the eyes of the Russian officials.

Instead of analysing the trial by looking only at its unexpected verdict, the second chapter has described the changing Tsarist priorities at different stages of the trial process. By

¹⁰¹² Ismail-Zade, *Graf I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov: namestnik kavkazskii*, 96.

doing so, it has explained the achievements of the trial for the Tsarist regime: the liquidation of the Dashnaks and the intimidation of the Armenian clergy and the Armenian bourgeoisie, which facilitated their coming to terms with the regime between 1907 and 1912. Despite the limited number of convictions at the final session and the forgery scandal, the trial demonstrated that the entire judiciary process from 1908 to 1912 played a key role in the reformulation of Russia's policies regarding its Armenians.

The differences between the capital and Tiflis were also displayed in the formulation of new relations between the Russian administration and the Armenian Church from 1907 to 1912. The third chapter has delineated how and why the viceroy, with the support of Izvolskii and Sazonov, convinced Stolypin not to change the status and the privileges of the Catholicosate as well as the procedures of the Armenian Catholicosate elections. Considering it a key ally both at home and abroad, the viceroy knew that Stolypin's proposals regarding the Armenian Catholicosate would be interpreted as another wave of Tsarist repression by the Armenians. Although the Ministry of Internal Affairs continued to express its reservations during the Catholicosate elections in 1908 and 1911, the viceroy's line was mainly followed and only small changes about the governance and the privileges of the Armenian Church were made, which was helpful for the improved relations between the Armenian Church and the Russian authorities. As noted by Vorontsov-Dashkov and the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russia's domestic interests in the South Caucasus were closely connected with its foreign policy interests in Ottoman and Persian empires considering the Armenian and Muslim populations on both sides of the border.

The third chapter has also argued that the improved relations with the Armenian Church were facilitated by the Dashnak trial, which was an excellent excuse to weed out the revolutionary elements within the Armenian clergy. In addition to the general weakening of the party in the South Caucasus, mainly owing to the trial, the party's socialist character as a member of the Second International also damaged the prestige of the Dashnaks among the Armenian clergy. As a result, toward 1912, the Dashnak influence on the Armenian clergy weakened. Meanwhile, the election of Surenian—a regime-friendly Catholicos—further reinforced the new understanding between the Armenian

Church and Russia. Once considered the centre of Armenian sedition, the Armenian Church became an obedient intermediary for Russia in its dealings with both the Russian and the Ottoman Armenians by 1912, when a new course of Russian foreign policy regarding the Ottoman Empire was on the agenda.

Aside from its ecclesiastical dimension, the Armenian Church—the central institution for Armenian educational matters—was also part of the nationalities question in the South Caucasus. In the same period, the Georgians demanded the restoration of the autocephaly of their church, which was rejected by the Tsarist officials on the grounds that it would promote separatism. As the Georgians could not reverse their declining economic fortunes and were denied more cultural liberties the Georgian national movement remained influential and continued to propagate anti-Tsarist sentiment among the Georgians. The viceroy noted the difficulties to address the grievances of the Georgians, which were deeply entangled in the agrarian question in the region. However, the viceroy's main fear in this period was about the growing influence of the pan-Islamist movement in the region.

The increased politicization of the Russian Muslims during the revolution of 1905 was also the case with the Azeris. More alarmingly for the Russian authorities, the Azeris were also affected by the constitutional movements in the neighbouring Muslim empires in this period. The Tsarist officials were worried about the political developments among the Azeris but this reached new heights after 1908 as the CUP became the leading force in Ottoman politics. From then on, as the fourth chapter demonstrates, the Tsarist authorities increasingly became obsessed with the empire-wide threat of the pan-Islamist movement. For the Tsarist authorities, one of the key bases of this threat was the South Caucasus. Toward 1912, the Tsarist officials in Tiflis and St. Petersburg, from top to bottom, were firmly convinced that the pan-Islamist emissaries were running rampant in the South Caucasus. Given the strategic location of the region and Muslim demographic superiority, the Azeris were now seen by the Russian authorities as the most potentially explosive nationality in the region. The fourth chapter has claimed that the negative perceptions of the Georgians and the Azeris in the eyes of the Russian officials between

1907 and 1912 were instrumental in the replacement of the troublemaker image of the Armenians with that of a useful ally in this period.

This was particularly the case with the Armenian bourgeoisie, which made its peace with the Tsarist regime between 1907 and 1912 as the region stabilized. Apart from their common interests in economic stability and their shared dislike of a strong labour movement, there were also political aspects of this rapprochement. Both sides approved of the maintenance of Armenian political primacy in local politics. The fourth chapter has also explained how the liquidation of the Dashnaktsutiun organization in the region facilitated better relations between the viceroyalty and the Russian Armenian bourgeoisie, which again became the most influential element in Russian Armenian affairs with the weakening of the Dashnaktsutiun. In early 1912, the members of the Armenian bourgeoisie could now ask Mayor Khatissian not to attend the final session of the Dashnak trial as a witness because they feared that this would risk tarnishing their improved relations with the regime.¹⁰¹³

From 1907 to 1912, the gradual change of relations between the Armenian political establishment and the Russian administration was mainly conditioned by domestic concerns in the South Caucasus. From 1912, changing international dynamics became the dominant factor in relations between the Russian administration and its Armenians. The revived Russian interest in the reforms for the Ottoman Armenians in late 1912 as part of its grander foreign policy interests regarding the Ottoman Empire would be at the centre of this new course. As the fifth chapter has argued, aside from Russia's concerns over the fate of the Ottoman Empire after the Ottoman losses against the Italians and the Balkan states, its new equilibrium with its own Armenians was also crucial. From late 1912 on, the Russian diplomats, particularly Sazonov, emphasized that their close interest in the problems of the Ottoman Armenians was aimed at preventing these problems from spreading to the South Caucasus. This concern for the Armenian reform process remained consistent with the prudent Russian foreign policy-making about the Ottoman Empire between 1912 and 1914.

¹⁰¹³ Khatissian, 'The Memoirs of a Mayor (Part II),' 106.

The fifth chapter has demonstrated how its improved relations with its Armenian subjects enabled Russia to pursue a more active foreign policy regarding the Ottoman Armenians from 1912. Moreover, by highlighting the intricate links between Russia's relations with the Russian and Ottoman Armenians, this chapter has argued that such an active policy, in turn, reinforced the improved relations of the regime with its own Armenians from 1912 to 1914. In this period, as a result of Russia's patronage of the Ottoman Armenians, Russia's relations with its own Armenians became even more cordial considering the extent of the Tsarist concerns about the pan-Islamist subversion in the area (now coordinated by the German consulates), the increased labour activity and the influence of the Georgian national movement.

As of 1912, the Armenian bourgeoisie and the Armenian Church had amicable relations with the regime while the Dashnaksutiun decided not to antagonize Russia because of its support for the Ottoman Armenians. From late 1912 until the outbreak of the war, the Dashnaksutiun remained essentially in the same position, despite the scepticism of some of its members about Russia. In return for not complicating Russia's internal and external affairs, the convicted members of the Dashnaksutiun trial were pardoned and their arms and personnel transport from the Caucasus to Eastern Anatolia were allowed to a certain extent. Meanwhile, the Russian Armenian bourgeoisie was consolidating its political, economic and cultural influence in the South Caucasus. Based on this upward trend in their relations with the Tsarist authorities, what it now wanted was a more vigorous Russian support for the Ottoman Armenians, for which they often expressed their concerns to the viceroy. With the signing of the reform agreement in February 1914, the mutual understanding between the viceroyalty and the Russian Armenian bourgeoisie was now expected to yield economic benefits in Eastern Anatolia for both sides as Russia had new designs for commercial expansion in the Ottoman Empire.

From 1912 to 1914, the Catholicos not only became the intermediary between the Russian Armenians and the viceroyalty but he also ensured that the activities of the Armenian National Delegation in Europe for the Armenian reforms were in line with Russian priorities. The assurances of the Catholicos to the viceroy in the immediate aftermath of the outbreak of the First World War—months before the hostilities between

Russia and Ottoman Empires started—attested to a remarkable change of relations between 1903 and 1914.

The evolution of the Armenian question in the South Caucasus between 1903 and 1914 witnessed wars, revolutions and bloody ethnic conflicts. The findings of this study are intended to shed light on various aspects of these events. From August 1914 to the Soviet takeover of the South Caucasus, the region witnessed another cycle of wars, revolutions and ethnic conflicts, the implications of which are felt even today. Although the scope of this thesis does not go beyond August 1914, the thesis aims to provide a better understanding of the Russian-Ottoman conflict during the First World War by examining the making of the Russian foreign policy regarding the Ottoman Empire on the eve of the war, with a particular focus on its relations with the Armenians.

The nature of relations between the Russian authorities with the Armenian Church, the Armenian bourgeoisie, the Dashnaktsutiun, and the Ottoman Armenians from 1903 to August 1914 is critical to understand various aspects of the Russian strategy regarding the Armenians on both sides of the frontier during the war. The findings of the thesis provide a starting point for further research for the students of the First World War who investigate the Russian-Ottoman conflict and the place of the Armenians in it. For instance, rather than presenting Russia and the Armenians as eternal partners and an aggressive Russian foreign policy aiming at an immediate dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire on the eve of the war, this study has emphasized the fluidity of imperial priorities and the changing aspirations of the nationalities in the face of big political changes brought about by wars and revolutions in the early twentieth century.

Moreover, the arguments of the thesis about the Russian fears of pan-Islamist subversion among the Russian Muslims are relevant for understanding Russia's relations with its Muslim subjects during the First World War. This was particularly crucial for the Russian Muslims residing in the bordering regions, like the South Caucasus, especially after the Ottoman declaration of jihad in November 1914. Not surprisingly, the Soviet officials inherited the fears of their imperial predecessors as they were often alarmed about pan-Islamist and pan-Turkist movements among the Muslims of the Soviet Union.

The evolution of relations between the Russian administration and the Russian Armenians between 1903 and 1914—as described in this study—had also implications for the aftermath of the First World War. After the February Revolution, the members of the Armenian bourgeoisie declared their support for Russia, who saved their compatriots from the Turkish yoke. In the midst of the political chaos in the capital, in April 1917, the Provisional government appointed a commissar for the administration of Ottoman Armenia, whose adviser was Hagop Zavriev, a well-known Dashnak.¹⁰¹⁴ Meanwhile, the Catholicos was hoping that the Russian troops would still remain in Eastern Anatolia. However, the October revolution changed the entire picture.

In late 1917, the Tsarist administration in the South Caucasus collapsed and the political vacuum in the region was immediately filled by the leading national parties of the three main nationalities (the Dashnaktsutjun, Musavat, and the Georgian Mensheviks)—the products of the political developments in the South Caucasus in early twentieth century. These political parties initially formed the cadres of the Transcaucasian Federative Democratic Republic, and later the independent republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

This thesis has focused on the animosities between these national movements from 1903 to 1914 and their role in the formation of national identities in the region. The findings of this thesis are part of why the Transcaucasian Federative Democratic Republic could survive just more than a month. When it was falling apart in May 1918, the Georgian deputy Tsereteli noted that ‘it was impossible to speak of the unity of Transcaucasia as this unity had not existed in reality.’¹⁰¹⁵ He was quite right. From May 1918 to the final Soviet take-over of the South Caucasus in 1921, the region witnessed more wars and ethnic conflict among these peoples.

Under Soviet rule, relations between Moscow and the Armenians were redefined and the existing political pillars were now undesirable elements. As it happened under Golitsyn administration, the Armenian Church was persecuted by the Soviet regime. Now considered a reactionary institution, the Armenian Church was deprived of its former

¹⁰¹⁴ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 120-22.

¹⁰¹⁵ Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan 1905-1920*, 128.

economic, cultural and educational privileges. A leading force during the independence period, the Dashnaktsutun, was unsurprisingly at loggerheads with the Soviet authorities. Targeted as a bourgeois-nationalist party by the Soviet authorities, the Dashnaks went through a tumultuous period not unlike they experienced during their infamous trial orchestrated by Lyzhin. As it happened between 1908 and 1912, the Dashnaks had to flee abroad or go underground as the Soviet regime took root and soon they lost their political significance. The situation was similarly ominous for the members of the Armenian bourgeoisie, who were now the class enemies of the new regime.

Some of the concerns of Tsarist statesmen continued to exist under the Soviet regime. For instance, the difference of opinion between the viceroyalty and the central government regarding the use of national languages and schools between 1903 and 1914 was also displayed in the early Soviet policies of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization) and Stalin's denunciation of local nationalisms in 1934.¹⁰¹⁶ Another imperial legacy, the national animosities were still alive despite the demographic homogenization of the union republics and the Soviet propaganda of class solidarity. As the former Commissar of Nationalities Affairs, Stalin found a way to benefit from this by establishing the Nagorno-Karabagh autonomous oblast, which has created endless problems for the Armenians and the Azeris.

In 1905, it was agonizing for Maksim Gorky to read the news about the Armenian-Azeri clashes. He noted that 'he was not dispirited by the brutality as much as the stupidity of the people, who did not understand that an external evil force played with their dark rage.'¹⁰¹⁷ Gorky was very optimistic as he believed that the nationalities of the South Caucasus would soon forget about the conflicts among themselves and fight against their common enemy: the Russian autocracy. However, even after the Soviet experiment, they did not forget. When the Soviet hold in the South Caucasus was in tatters during the late 1980s, similar to the revolutionary days in 1905, another cycle of violence between the Armenians and the Azeris started, which still plagues the region.

¹⁰¹⁶ Suny, *Looking toward Ararat*, 148-55.

¹⁰¹⁷ Maksim Gorky, *O Kavkazskikh sobytiakh* (Tbilisi: Partizdat, 1936), 14.

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